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FOUND AND FETTERED.

THE TAKING OF TRESKIN, THE RUSSIAN ASSASSIN.

It is not *inapropos* for me to preface the remarkable story I have to tell by stating that, speaking in a general way, I am not in sympathy with things Russian. In spite of what may be said to the contrary by those who have an interest in misrepresenting facts, there is pretty conclusive evidence that the great and unwieldy Russian nation has in many respects scarcely emerged from mediæval barbarism. It is impossible for any free-minded person to travel through Russia at the present day without being made painfully aware of this. It might very aptly and somewhat epigrammatically be said that every man in Russia who rules is a tyrant, and every man who does not rule is a slave. Freedom, as we understand it, is unknown in the dominions of the Czar. The press is muzzled, the mouths of public speakers are muzzled, and if a Russian or a foreigner dwelling in Russia holds views that are adverse to the ruling powers, let him not express them if he values his liberty, his happiness, his life. The stranger travelling in the country is liable to be pounced down upon at any moment by some Government myrmidon, who, in his narrow-mindedness, thinks he sees an enemy in him. And woe betide the man who gets within the clutches of the law. Under

some frivolous pretext or another he may be detained without trial and without examination, until he moulders and his heart rends in twain with unbearable despair, suspense, and hope deferred.

The Russian form of government is as despotical as it is obsolete, while those entrusted with its administration are not as a rule men distinguished by marked ability or enlightenment, but they are those who have friends at Court, and who have given evidence of being haters of the people. In no other country in the world can you find people sunk in such besotted ignorance as are the masses of Russia. Foreign literature of all kinds is absolutely unknown to them, while such native papers as may come into their hands are written through Russian spectacles, and with the fear—which is almost greater than that of death—of the Government censor. Hundreds of persons are at the present moment languishing in Siberia for no other reason than that in some unguarded moment they allowed their feelings to betray them into a too free expression of opinion. Then followed the inevitable result. They were arrested, accused of being “dangerous to the State,” subjected in some cases to a trial that was all a farce, but as often as not there was no trial at all. They were then kept in some dreadful prison for periods ranging from months to years, and finally had to march with chained gangs into Siberia. To the world generally all this is a matter of tradition, if not of history, but to those who have travelled in the country with open eyes and unshackled minds it is more than tradition; it is a pitiable, a hideous truth.

Although I have thus freely expressed my opinion on the Government of Russia, let it not be supposed for a single moment that I countenance in any way the methods adopted by the revolutionary societies in

their efforts to redress their wrongs. Tyranny cannot be arrested by still greater tyranny, while the wild justice of revenge can in the end only serve to bring disaster on the heads of the weaker party. Yet, if ever political crimes can find justification in shameless oppression, they can do so in Russia; and in Treskin's case this was particularly so. The agitation that was caused in England at the time Treskin was arrested in London through my instrumentality will not be forgotten by those whose memories can carry them back for a generation. I venture to think, however, that it will add to the interest of my story, if I relate it in all its detail, from the very beginning to the pitiless end.

Some time before the Crimean War a young Pole by birth, named Egór Treskin, was living in St. Petersburg; he was employed as a clerk in a bank, and being very studious, and very industrious, he devoted his spare time to teaching languages in one of the public schools. In this capacity he met a young lady, who was destined to become his wife. She was a Russian, and an orphan. Her father had held a Government appointment as an inspector of mines, and in that capacity had ample opportunity of seeing the iniquity of the Russian exile system. Moved to deep pity and sympathy by what came under his notice, he allowed his feelings to get the better of his discretion, and his complaints of the tyranny and cruelty that were practised by governors, managers, overseers, and others, were many. The result being he incurred the hatred of this class of people, and became a marked man. Revenge was not long in following. He was denounced as a conspirator. By some means he was lured to a house of a well-known political suspect, who was under surveillance. The man was then accused of having visited this

house. He could not deny it, and was at once arrested. In this country such a thing would be laughed at, for here you may spout treason and act treason to your heart's content, and nobody will take any notice of you. But in Russia it is different; only let the faintest whisper of treason be breathed against a man in that benighted land, and the chances are it seals his doom.

In this unfortunate fellow's case, he had too many political and other enemies for him to hope to escape from the effects of the accusation. The more he tried to explain, the more deeply did he seem to become involved. He was like a bird which once gets the ensnaring lime upon its wings. All its efforts to free itself from the tenacious substance are futile, and serve but to exhaust it. So in Russia with a man who is suspected of treason. Hope has gone for him. He can never be the same again. In the case I am citing the man was detained, first in one prison and then in another, for five years, and, having been financially and socially ruined, he was transported to Siberia, leaving a delicate wife behind, and three young children—two sons and a daughter, Catherine. The mother, soon after the departure of her husband, died, and the children were brought up by a relative. Three years later the father was shot in attempting to escape from his place of exile.

When Egór Treskin first made Catherine's acquaintance, she was about twenty and very beautiful. Her father, however, having been a political prisoner, his children were subjected to a shameful system of espionage. Catherine, in particular, had suffered great annoyance, but she resolved to live it down, and was desirous of qualifying herself for a teacher. Treskin fell in love with her, and as soon as that was known, he was secretly warned that she

was a member of a tainted family, therefore must be tainted herself. This was infamous, but, unhappily, it is common in Russia. Although Treskin knew, no doubt, the seriousness of the warning, he allowed love to prevail, and married Catherine. The first year or two of their married life would seem to have been happy enough. A child was born to them and there was nothing apparently to disturb their serenity. But the ways of the Russian Government are inscrutable and mysterious, like those of the "Heathen Chinee." One day, during Treskin's absence at his business, two police officers entered his house, and arrested his wife, on the baseless and shameless charge of conspiring against the State. When the husband returned he found that his wife had been dragged off, with her helpless infant, to some prison. Distracted, he flew to headquarters, and begged to know, firstly, of what his wife was accused; secondly, where she had been taken to; thirdly, he craved to be allowed to see her. With the brutal cynicism so characteristic of the Russian official, he was told that he had better go away and hold his tongue, lest he himself should be placed under arrest. It was hinted that he had chosen to marry a suspected woman in spite of warning given to him, and he must therefore abide by the consequences.

For two long, dark, dreary, and dismal years Treskin moved heaven and earth in his endeavours to try and see his wife and child, but without effect, until at last it was intimated to him that she was to be exiled to Siberia. Broken-hearted and almost mad with grief, he vowed that he would accompany her. At last, with a diabolical refinement of cruelty, he was allowed to see her as she was on the eve of departure for the far east of Siberia. She had

grown haggard and old with suffering. Her baby was dead, and it was only too evident her mind was unhinged.

Treskin applied for and obtained permission to accompany his unhappy wife, and they travelled together for many dreadful months, suffering the horrors of the steppes, and the hardships and privations of the dreadful journey. Poor Catherine's strength was unequal to the strain, and somewhere in the Trans-Baikal provinces she was stricken with mortal illness, and on her deathbed she told her husband a revolting and fearsome story in which a high Russian official, Count Cherékof, who was an inspector of prisons, was implicated. She said that she had intended to keep the shame and suffering she had endured a secret, but felt that she could not die until she had revealed it to her husband.

Over his dead and outraged wife's body Treskin swore an oath to God that he would be revenged, and having buried her in a convict's grave he set his face westward again, brooding deeply over his shame and wrong. In due time he found himself once again in St. Petersburg, but he was so changed that his most intimate friends failed to recognize him. Secretly and silently he allied himself with the enemies of the Government and became one of the most dangerous of conspirators, most pronounced of Nihilists. His wrongs had turned his heart to stone and he was pitiless, terrible, and deadly.

I cannot follow his career in all its details during the three succeeding years after his return from Siberia, but it may be summarized as one of arch plotting against the Government and the institutions of his country. There is no doubt his wrongs and shame had made him a dangerous and insidious enemy, and it is certainly remarkable that during

this period he managed to elude vigilance and escape suspicion.

It would seem that during all this time he never forgot his enemy, but no opportunity occurred for him to carry out his deadly act of vengeance. Count Cherékof had been sent on some secret mission to France and England. But Treskin evidently knew how to wait. He bided his time, and his time came at last. The Count returned to Russia, and for some reason or other was soon after entertained at a public banquet. That night late a note was slipped into the Count's hand as he was in the act of leaving the place where he had been entertained. The note was from a lady of his acquaintance, and begged for an interview. The Count, it appears, had drunk freely, and probably it was due to that that he displayed a recklessness which was fatal to him. He told his servants that he had an appointment to keep, and though he was pressed to allow attendants to accompany him he refused to do so, saying he was quite able to take care of himself, and, hiring a public carriage, he was driven to a street in the northern part of the city. There he alighted, and what followed is shrouded in mystery to a considerable extent. But what is certain is that he went to a house at the top of the street and a little later that house was found to be on fire. An alarm was raised, the engines were called out, and the fire extinguished before much harm had been done. On entering the smoking building, the firemen found on a bed in one of the rooms the body of Count Cherékof. He was partly undressed. A dagger was thrust up to the hilt in his breast, and a bullet had penetrated his brain. Attached to the handle of the dagger by a piece of ribbon was a card, on which was written:—

“Thus are my wrongs avenged,
and
Thus are destroyed the enemies
of the people.”

It was pretty clear now that the Count had been lured to the house under false pretences, and there assassinated. Whether the house had been wilfully set on fire to hide all traces of the crime or not was not proved; but in all probability the conflagration was accidental, otherwise what would have been the use of the card on the dead man's breast?

The strange tragedy, of course, caused an immense sensation in Russia, for the Count belonged to a very old and aristocratic family, being closely allied, in fact, to the Royal family itself. The Count, however, had never been popular amongst the people. Between the Russian nobility and the lower classes there is a wide line of demarcation, and they hate each other. Oppression in its very worst form is exercised by those in power, and consequently they are detested. It can well be understood, therefore, that the Count's dreadful and tragic end begot no sympathy amongst those over whom he had so long tyrannized, but official and aristocratic Russia was stirred to its depths. The murder showed that the people were still dangerous and to be feared, and something like a panic displayed itself amongst the high-born and the favoured ones of royalty who knew in their hearts that they were all marked men and would meet with a similar doom to that which had overtaken the Count if opportunity presented itself. They lived, in fact, over a mine that might at any moment explode, and so a wail went forth about the inadequacy of the police, and a bitter demand was made that the Count's slayer should be

brought to justice. Arrests were made wholesale and indiscriminately. It was as if a fisherman, wishing to catch some particular fish, cast his net into the sea and drew up thousands of other fish which he destroyed in the hope that the particular one he wanted might be amongst them.

It came out then that for some little time previous Treskin had been suspected, and now he was sought for and could not be found. His lodgings were searched and evidence discovered that he had been mixed up in a revolutionary movement that, had it succeeded, would all but have turned Russia upside down. The officials were aghast, the nobles terrified, for the conspiracy was so widespread, its aims so sweeping. More wholesale arrests followed. Men, women, young and old, as well as delicate children, were immured in the dreadful prisons, and the lady—a Miss Dicheskuld—who had sent the letter to the General, which was the means of luring him to the house, was, of course, arrested. There had been an intrigue between her and the Count. He had treated her badly, and in order to avenge herself on him, she had readily joined the conspirators. The letter she had written led the Count to suppose that she was desirous of a reconciliation, and so he had fallen easily into the trap set for him.

This unfortunate young woman was threatened with death if she did not denounce her co-conspirator, and under the fear of this threat she confessed that it was Treskin's hand that had done the Count to death.

It is not an exaggeration to say that law in Russia is based upon a system of *persecution*, not prosecution as it is in most countries that lay claim to be ranked amongst the civilized nations of the earth. Let a man once bring himself under the cognizance of

Russian law, and for ever afterwards, so long as he may live, he is a marked man. He can no more escape from its meshes than can a fly escape when once it has entangled itself in the web of the crafty spider. Only too painfully was this exemplified in the case of Treskin's ill-starred wife, and such cases might be multiplied *ad infinitum*. The people of the Czar's kingdom are ruled by terrorism in its worst form. The chained slave may writhe under the lash, but he cannot resist it. The caged tiger may roar never so loud, but his roaring has no effect on those who are protected by the iron bars. Give the Russian masses freedom, and what should we see? A mighty whirlwind of human passion—the result of centuries of cruel wrong, of hateful greed, of bitter oppression, of the exercise of power against right—sweeping from one end of the great Empire to the other—a whirlwind that would smite the nobles into the dust and hurl the Czar from his throne, crushed and shattered. This expression of feeling is the outcome of knowledge that has come to me since I unhappily gave up Treskin to his pitiless persecutors. Had I known then what I know now I would have allowed my right hand to have withered before I had stirred a limb to aid the hunters.

If Mademoiselle Dicheskuld thought that in denouncing Treskin she would save herself, she must have been singularly ignorant of her country's law, or otherwise she was the victim of some strange delusion. Death might have been her portion otherwise. As it was, something more dreadful than death was meted out to her. After the hideous mockery of a trial that was not a trial, but an outrage on justice, she was sentenced to banishment to Verkhoyansk, in the Arctic solitudes of Northern Asia. What became of her I know not, but that she perished long before

the awful journey of thousands of miles was ended is only too probable.

It might be thought that this act of pitiless vengeance would have satisfied the dripping fangs of the hideous monster termed Russian justice; but not a bit of it. Treskin still lived. Treskin was still at large. What mattered it that his wretched wife had been cruelly persecuted and done to death? What mattered it that his heart had been wrenched and torn and his brain turned by the shame and wrong he had suffered at the hands of a titled scoundrel? All that counted for nothing. He had slain the scoundrel, and that was a high crime in the sight of the Administration. He must be hunted and tracked until snared, and then—ah, what then! We shall see.

Everyone who has travelled in France knows to what an extent police espionage is carried on in that country, but it is nothing compared to what the espionage is in Russia. There your dearest relative may be in the secret pay of the law, and your lightest whisper against the powers that be may lay you unexpectedly in a prison; and yet great crimes are committed, men and women escape, and revolutionary meetings are held. Nevertheless when once a man is suspected, he may be certain that he will have no peace. He will be shadowed night and day. His goings out and comings in will be marked. He is, so to speak, watched through a microscope, so that the most trivial act, which elsewhere would be treated with contempt, is magnified into an offence of the greatest importance. And when the hue and cry has been started it is taken up and repeated from every province, every town, village, and hamlet, and from every housetop, every street corner, every bazaar, market, and shop. A “suspect” who is wanted is, in the most literal sense,

hunted. There was no exception made in Treskin's case. He was denounced as one of the most dangerous conspirators and criminals who had ever shown themselves in antagonism to the beneficent institutions of their country, and to the benign and humane rule of the "Little Father," the White Czar. Such a blackened ruffian must be taken. For the good of the countless millions of the free and happy people of enlightened Russia, he would have to be made an example of. The very earth would throb with indignation while he walked upon it. What mattered it that he had been wronged, outraged. What mattered it that his wife and babe had been torn from him, and murdered in the name of the law? What mattered it that his home had been broken up, his life blighted, his heart shattered? These were petty trifles unworthy of serious consideration. A noble of Russia had been assassinated by a plebeian, and a noble of Russia couldn't do wrong, and so his slayer would have to be taken. It is one thing, however, to make resolutions, and another to carry them out. Russia was ransacked, but Treskin found not. By the extensive circulation of public announcements people were warned of the serious penalties they incurred if they gave harbourage to the hunted criminal, or afforded him shelter or support of any kind.

As is usually the case under such circumstances, the officials and the police were seized with a sort of panic. They saw conspiracy in the most harmless gatherings of the people, and wholesale arrests were made. But still the man who was so very much wanted was not forthcoming. Amongst the class to which Count Cherékof had belonged there was loud discontent expressed at the failure of the myrmidons of the law to seize the dreadful Treskin.

They declared that, so long as he was at large, no one of position could sleep safely in his bed. But protest, grumbling, and fear were unproductive of any result, unless it was of proving how unjust and unreasonable men and women can be. Treskin had gone, and, when two years had passed, it may safely be said that in a general way he was forgotten. Russia is always so busy with imprisoning, slaying, or sending political and other offenders to Siberia, that her attention cannot always be occupied with an individual, and so the excitement begotten by the death of Count Cherékof died down, and Treskin's name was uttered no more until one day a strange chance placed his enemies in possession of a clue to his whereabouts.

The clue was furnished to them in this wise. There had come to England as an exile a man by the name of Joseph Pushkin. He was a Russian who had groaned with sorrow at the iniquities of Russian officials and the injustice of Russian law. Of good birth and with ample means at his disposal he might, had he been disposed to suppress his feelings and keep his thoughts to himself, have lived unmolested and have even gained high office in the State. But he was made of different stuff. His was not the nature to remain silent when he saw his humbler countrymen smitten into the dust with oppression and wrong; so he raised his voice, he used his pen, he brought all his influence to bear in a useless endeavour to sweep away the abuses which were such a standing disgrace in the country of his birth. But it was as if a man had attempted to overturn a mountain by pressing his shoulders against it. Pushkin's efforts were just as futile. He was persecuted, he was imprisoned, then banished to the wilds of Siberia. He managed, however, to

make his escape *en route*, and succeeded in reaching our own land of liberty. Then he went about lecturing in order that some truths of darkest Russia should be known to the enlightened people of these islands. In one of these lectures he alluded to Treskin's case. He did not mention him by name, but told the story of the wretched man's life as evidence of the barbarities that Christian Russia could perpetrate in the name of justice and right. One of the lynx-eyed spies, who resided in England in the pay of Russia, recognized the hero of the story. This spy was a woman, be it said to her disgrace. She was a writer in the public press, and having more regard for the blood-money that was paid to her than she had for the truth, she constantly described the Czar as a just and humane man, and Russia as a country of beneficent and righteous laws. When she learned that Treskin was in England she lost no time in sending word to her employers, and then there came to London one Prevboski, a Russian detective of considerable fame in his own country. He was authorized to demand Treskin's extradition on the grounds that he was not a political refugee, but a common murderer who had been guilty of a revolting and cold-blooded crime. Of course, it goes without saying not one word was uttered of the fearful wrongs that Treskin had suffered.

The arguments that Prevboski used, or rather the representations he was authorized to make in the name of the Government of his country, prevailed here, and after considerable discussion it was decided that Treskin should be extradited. But then came the question, Where was he? He had to be found, and the duty of finding him devolved upon me.

At this time my mind was a perfect *tabula rasa* so far as Treskin was concerned. Up to then I had never even heard his name, consequently I was in entire ignorance of his story, though I knew a good deal of Russian administration and Russian life, my knowledge being derived from residence and travel in the country. I was therefore not prepossessed by any means in favour of Russia. But I did not allow this to weigh when I undertook to look for the fugitive. He was represented to me as a scoundrel of the deepest dye. His crime was pictured as of exceptional atrocity. His victim, it was said, was one of the kindest, most just, virtuous, and humane of men. The cause of the crime—so I was informed—was an insensate and utterly groundless jealousy on the part of the “trebly-dyed villain” Treskin.

Now, making allowance for over-colouring and exaggeration, which your Russian official is much addicted to, it appeared as if Treskin was a vulgar murderer undeserving of sympathy; and it was to the interest of law and order that he should be taken.

Prevboski was a very typical Russian, or rather let me say he was a typical Russian official, for between the official and non-official there is a vast difference. He believed—or affected to believe—that the masses were very much like the wolves which haunt the wild and lonely steppes and the weird dark forests of his native land. They were dangerous when free, and chains and bars were the only things to keep them in subjection. He considered the mode of government and the forms of administration peculiar to his native land perfect, and a model for all other countries, and he regarded the Czar as a ruler by Divine right, who could not

err, and who could commit no sin. Prevboski spoke no word of English, so that he was at a disadvantage, and it was arranged that he was to remain quietly in London and wait the result of my efforts.

Necessarily a good deal of publicity had been given to the fact that an application had been made for Treskin's extradition, and this made the task of taking him more difficult. For to be forewarned is to be forearmed, and unless he was an absolute fool he would take means to effectually conceal himself.

The reader need scarcely be told that in London there is a relatively vast Russian population. Many of these are exiles by necessity; others have banished themselves in the hope—often a delusive one—that they will secure a share of English gold. But under any circumstances they enjoy a freedom here impossible in their own country; nor need they go in fear of molestation by the authorities unless they break the law. A great number of these people are Jews, and they may be found congregating together in little colonies in the East End. I began my quest by going into these colonies and making inquiries calculated to elicit some particulars of Treskin's whereabouts. Of course I had been informed that Pushkin had alluded to his compatriot in his lectures, and, therefore, the natural inference was that Pushkin knew where the fugitive was. But it was not in the least likely that he would betray his hiding-place. Having failed, however, in my East End search, I deemed it desirable to get into touch with Pushkin, and he being a public man it was not difficult to find him out.

I ascertained that he was a daily visitor to a restaurant in Soho which was kept by a Russian

and was mainly supported by Russians. Here, having supped or dined in Russian fashion, he was to be found nightly, when in town, absorbed in his favourite game of chess, of which he was a passionate lover. I, too, began to frequent the restaurant, and had soon scraped acquaintance with Pushkin; and being myself a fair hand at chess I was enabled to challenge him and so strengthen the acquaintanceship. He was a reserved man under ordinary circumstances, but I soon learned that he could be drawn on Russian subjects, and waxed warm and indignant when the government of his country was alluded to. After a time, when I became more familiar with him, I traded on this weakness, and one evening ventured to ask his opinion of Treskin.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "they will never take Treskin—at least, I hope not. It would be a crime if the British Government should give him up."

"But he has been guilty of a crime," I remarked.

"He has," answered Pushkin, as an angry light gleamed from his dark eyes; "a justifiable crime."

"But surely you do not mean to say that murder is justifiable," said I.

Pushkin looked at me steadfastly for some moments, then he made answer:

"Sir, are you not aware that there are times when murder is not murder? When to remove a tyrant, an outrager of women, an oppressor of men, finds acceptance in the sight of heaven."

"I was not aware of that," I replied, somewhat ironically.

"Then you have much to learn," he retorted.

"So far as my knowledge extends," I said, "I have always understood that we are scripturally informed that 'vengeance is the Lord's.'"

"And yet we read in the Scriptures of men slaying

men," he answered with something like a sneer on his face. "But do you not believe that there are times in our human affairs when a man may be made an instrument in the hands of God to remove a tyrant from the earth which he encumbers and darkens?"

I declined to express an opinion on that point, preferring to keep my views to myself; but I urged upon Pushkin that his countryman had certainly outraged man's laws in taking upon himself to slay a fellow without trial and without warning. This caused the Russian to become more and more excited. He declared that Treskin had done a great and noble act; that Count Cherékof, being so full of iniquity and evil, his death was in the nature of a blessing, and that Treskin, instead of being prosecuted, should be hailed as one of the saviours of society. I dissented from this view, whereat Pushkin grew more angry, and he vowed solemnly that he would do everything that lay in his power to do to defeat the "infamous design," as he phrased it, of the British Government to give up Treskin, and he added with fiery emphasis:

"But, take my word for it, sir, Treskin will not be given up, for the simple reason that Treskin will not be found."

"Unless he is dead," I responded, "I should say it is highly probable that sooner or later Treskin will be unearthed."

"Treskin is not dead," cried Pushkin, with a bitter smile, "and yet he will baffle the hunters."

I shrugged my shoulders, as if I wished him to understand I was indifferent one way or the other. but my views did not coincide with his, for I thought that, even if I myself failed in the task I had undertaken, somebody else would in all human probability succeed.

My argument with Pushkin had conclusively proved one thing to me, which was that he was not likely to betray his friend if he could help it. But it was very evident that he was aware of Treskin's hiding-place, and I set to work to try and think out some plan for getting his secret from him. The only reasonable one, as it seemed to me, was to shadow him, in the hope that he would afford me a clue. Before leaving him on this particular night I said, as a sort of parting shot fired apparently at random, and yet with a definite and deliberate aim:

"Well, if your friend is still in England, you may depend upon it he will be tracked down in time."

"Oh, my friend is still in England," was the answer, with a smile of self-assurance, "but you may depend upon it he will not be tracked down."

To some extent Pushkin had given himself away in his answer, and my object was so far served. He had admitted that Treskin was still in the United Kingdom, and deductively I felt it highly probable that he was in London, because London, being such a huge place, and its population made up of such a heterogeneous collection of nationalities, a man may more easily hide himself there than elsewhere. In London it is not a difficult matter for a man to lose his individuality, so to speak. You become part and parcel of a great whole, but the immensity of the mass of which you are a composing atom causes you in a general way to be no more conspicuous or distinguishable than one grain of sand is distinguishable from another grain of sand on the seashore. This may seem little more than theory, but it is daily borne out by fact, and many a hunted man has been able to lie *perdu* in the teeming Babylon until the scent has grown cold, and then he has slipped away for good and all. However, vast as

London is, it narrows one's sphere of inquiry and action when you are assured that the person you are seeking is one amongst the millions. To him who watches and waits the law of chances are in his favour, and these chances are immeasurably increased when the watcher brings a trained mind to bear on the task he has in hand; for then chance is reduced to something like certainty. There is an old proverb which expresses the fundamental essence of a great truth. It is, "Birds of a feather flock together." He who makes a study of human ways knows how apposite the proverb is to men and women. The ignorant gravitate to the ignorant; the refined to the refined; foreigners to their kind, and so on. A study of this law, which may be said for all practicable purposes to be immutable, enables anyone acquainted with the habits of a particular person whom we may be anxious to discover to turn to the quarter where he is most likely to discover him. Acting on the principle, therefore, I deemed it highly probable that, assuming Treskin was in London, he would be within touch of his compatriots, and particularly with Pushkin. So I watched Pushkin with, if I may so express it, a sleepless vigilance. I was morally certain that sooner or later he would inadvertently deliver his friend into my hands. Let me add point to my statement already made that at this time I believed Treskin to be a mere vulgar assassin, whose deed called for the very severest punishment which his fellow-man could award.

It was about three weeks later—that is, three weeks after I had commenced my shadowing of Pushkin—that I tracked him one day to a villa residence in the "classic regions" of St. John's Wood. It was a small detached house standing in about half an acre of well-kept ground. On the

gate was affixed a brass plate bearing the legend, "Madame Marie Lablanc, Teacher of Languages."

Pushkin remained in the house about two hours. Then he came out and went away. A dozen reasons, of course, might have been advanced to explain the motive of his visit to madame, but I said to myself, "When a man goes to a house and stays there for two hours, he must be well acquainted with the inmate or inmates, therefore the assumption is that Pushkin is very familiar with Madame Lablanc."

Arguing thus, I felt sure that madame and the man I was shadowing were friends. That being so, it was likely the lady might be in possession of information, which would be valuable if she could be induced to impart it. Lablanc was a French name, and I was curious to know what connection there was between this French lady and Pushkin, the Russian. A few inquiries pushed in the proper quarter elicited the fact that Pushkin was a pretty frequent visitor to that villa, and as it did not seem to me probable he went there for the sake of studying foreign languages, I thought it curious, to say the least, and I resolved on interviewing Madame Lablanc.

Three days later I knocked at the door of the villa, and inquired for madame, and a natty maid-servant showed me into a small parlour that was strongly impregnated with the odour of stale tobacco. In fact I sniffed that odour the moment the front door was opened for my admission, and this was pretty conclusive evidence that someone residing there was a heavy smoker. A few minutes later the door of the parlour was pushed open, and an exceedingly pretty woman of about thirty years of age entered, and with a slight bow inquired my business in the English tongue, that bore not the slightest trace of a foreign accent.

"May I inquire if you are Madame Lablanc?" I asked.

"Oh, no," she answered, "I am madame's niece."

"But you are not French," I remarked with a smile."

"No, my aunt has English connections by marriage," was the somewhat haughty answer.

"I had no intention of being rude," I said apologetically. "May I see your aunt? I wish to make some inquiries about her terms for teaching French and German."

"I will give you a prospectus," replied the lady.

"I should prefer if you will allow me to see madame," I answered.

"Well, you will have to wait for a little while, as she is engaged at present."

I intimated that I was quite prepared to wait, and the niece left me. Twenty minutes or so later the door once more opened, and there entered a solidly-built, neatly-dressed woman with grey hair worn over the temples, brushed behind the ears, and done up in a knob at the back of the head. She wore dark blue spectacles, so that it was impossible to see her eyes, but she had a sallow complexion and a haggard, careworn-looking face. She spoke English fluently, but with an unmistakable accent, and her manner was subdued and reserved. She told me that she taught seven different languages, including Polish and Russian. The result of my interview was I arranged to take lessons in French and German, and to commence on the following day. French I spoke fluently, and German well, but I did not tell her that, and true to the appointment I was there on the following day at the appointed hour. I should mention that she had asked me if I wished to receive my instruction in

a class or privately. Of course I decided on the latter, as my purpose would be best served thereby.

There was something about Madame Lablanc that struck me as peculiar. Her voice was harsh and rough, her movements ungraceful, her manner reserved, cold, and brusque. My aim, of course, was to find out if she knew anything of Treskin; but she was so strangely reserved that I did not think it likely she would allow herself to be drawn out, for certainly she showed no disposition to give information on any subject except that in which she was engaged, namely, her teaching. Once or twice I ventured to ask her a question about Russia, and she promptly snuffed me out by saying peremptorily :

"Monsieur, you are here to learn, not to question, except in so far as you may require explanations of any point you don't understand."

I bowed as if thoroughly rebuked, but I resolved to try what I could make of the niece. The one difficulty in the way was to get an interview with her, for let it be borne in mind that I had to be very careful not to arouse suspicion. Chance, however, favoured me. On leaving the house one day I met her returning to it. I stopped and spoke to her, flattered her aunt, and said I thought she was very clever.

"Yes," answered the lady, "she is. She is far too clever to have to grind her life away in the mere drudgery of teaching."

"Why does she not take to something else?" said I.

"What can she take to," replied the niece with some show of irritability. "She is no longer young, and the struggle to live nowadays is fearfully hard. The competition is so keen in every walk of life."

"True, true," I murmured sympathetically. Then

after a further brief conversation I was about to part from her, when I stopped and said suddenly, as though the thought had only just occurred to me, "By the way, do you know Pushkin, the Russian?"

Her face coloured, and she seemed to me as if she was confused, nor did she answer me straight off; for her reply was: "Do you know him?" with an emphasis laid upon the "you."

"By sight," I said; "and I saw him coming from your house one day."

"Oh, yes," she answered, recovering herself; "He does come, though rarely. He took English lessons from my aunt."

"Really! That is rather strange, is it not?—that a Russian should go to a French lady to be taught English in England."

"I don't know that there is anything very strange about it. It's a free country, and people can do as they like."

"Certainly, the country is free enough," I responded. "If it were not there would not be such an influx of foreign scoundrels who find their native land too hot to hold them. There is a man by the name of Treskin, for instance—a brutal assassin, as I understand, who has managed to find snug quarters here, and to so far elude those who would like to meet him."

My remark caused the lady to grow very pale, and she seemed for some moments to be strangely agitated. Then in a voice that decidedly quivered she answered, almost passionately:

"Treskin is not a brutal assassin. That is only the tale told by his enemies, and if you knew anything of Russia you would know that if a man has given offence to the Government, and the thousand and one fawning and lying sycophants who do its despotic bidding, he is for evermore marked, and

no lie that human brain is capable of forging is considered bad enough to tell about him."

"You espouse Treskin's cause warmly," I said, looking at her fixedly, for I had no doubt from her manner and the way she spoke that she was well acquainted with him.

"As I would espouse the cause of anyone who was oppressed," she answered with composure, for she had quite recovered herself now. "Treskin is a cruelly oppressed man, and I pray to God that the hounds of his infamous Government will never get on his track."

"I should say myself that it is almost certain they will."

She laughed—a strange, sneering, chuckling sort of laugh; a laugh full of meaning, although its meaning was obscured to me then, and she said:

"You may safely venture to wager heavily that he will not be taken. But excuse me. I must go. Good-day." With this abrupt termination to our conversation she turned round and hurried off, and now a feeling took possession of me that I was at last on Treskin's track. It was obvious that he could be no stranger to this lady, and from the warm manner in which she defended him it seemed to me probable that he might be her lover. At any rate I determined to keep in touch with her, impressed with the belief that ultimately I should succeed in obtaining from her some clue to the fugitive's whereabouts. The emotion she had displayed when Treskin was discussed proved conclusively that she might be excited to a pitch when she would in all likelihood make some admission which would prove valuable to those who were seeking the fugitive.

It was about a week later, during which I had not seen the niece, that I was with Madame Lablanc one

morning reading German with her. It was cold weather, and she wore a loose sort of dressing-gown lined with fur. She rose somewhat suddenly from her seat to stir the fire, and in doing so something from an inside pocket in her gown fell heavily to the floor. To my astonishment I saw that it was a revolver. I stooped and picked it up, when with an angry movement she snatched it from me. The next moment she looked abashed and confused. "Excuse me," she stammered, apologetically, as she thrust the weapon into her pocket again. "I am a stupidly nervous woman and for years have carried a revolver, though I don't believe if the necessity were to arise I should have the courage to use the thing. Indeed I don't even know how to use it."

Her manner of saying this was insincere, and carried no weight with me, for I was sure that she could be a very ugly antagonist indeed with a weapon like that in her hand. Nor did it seem to me in the least likely that she was ignorant of its use, as she pretended to be.

"It is a somewhat dangerous toy for a lady to carry about with her," I remarked, "and you will pardon me for saying that you must be impressed with an idea that an occasion may suddenly arise when you will find it necessary to defend yourself with that weapon."

"Defend myself from whom and what?" she asked sharply.

"Madam," I answered, "I am not the keeper of your thoughts."

The discussion was not continued, as she resumed the reading lesson we were engaged upon.

This little incident of the revolver was not lost upon me. It set me pondering, and I began to compare notes, with the result that I came to the

conclusion there was a good deal of mystery about Madame Lablanc which required explanation. When next I visited her I scrutinized her closely, and felt convinced that the grey hair which was such a conspicuous feature, and which was so carefully done up, had never grown upon her head. It was, in fact, a wig, but so admirably made, and simulated Nature so closely, that it was well calculated to deceive anyone. Now, why should she wear a wig of this kind? And why did she carry a revolver? To the first question I answered to myself—"For some strong reason she is concealing her identity." To the second—"Should her disguise be penetrated she would bring the weapon into use, either against herself or against someone else."

That night I called upon Prevboski, the Russian detective.

"Have you ever seen Treskin?" I asked.

"No. But I have numerous photographs of him taken at various times and in various positions."

The photographs I carefully inspected, studying the features, in fact, in all their detail, and gradually a suspicion that had been haunting me became less vague than it had been, and when I returned the photographs to the Russian I felt almost sure that I had at last been successful in my search, and had found the much-wanted Treskin.

"I want you to accompany me the day after tomorrow," I said to Prevboski, "to a certain house, and bring some of those photographs with you."

"Have you discovered Treskin?" he asked eagerly.

I intimated that I had some reason to think we should discover him; so the arrangement was made, and on the appointed day Prevboski and I presented ourselves at Madame Lablanc's residence, were duly admitted by the servant, and ushered into the room

where I had been in the habit of having my lessons. We waited some little time before anyone came to us. Then there entered the niece, who eyed the stranger keenly and suspiciously.

"This is an acquaintance of mine," I said. "He is a Russian, and is desirous of learning English."

This latter statement was true, in fact, for he was very desirous, indeed, of acquiring a knowledge of the English tongue, though he had no intention then of becoming a pupil of Madame's.

"Does he not understand English at all?" asked the niece still looking at him.

"I don't think he understands a word," I replied.

"But has he means to pay for his lessons? You will pardon me asking that, but we know from experience that Russian refugees who come to this country are often in sore pecuniary straits, and my aunt cannot afford to teach for nothing."

"I think, miss, that I may venture to assure you that if this gentleman should take lessons he will most certainly pay for them. But perhaps your aunt will see him. She can converse with him in his own tongue, and satisfy herself."

The niece assented that that was perhaps the best course, and she left the room; but the expression of her face and something in her manner gave me the idea that she was troubled and anxious. Presently she returned in company with her aunt, and I noted that Madame, so far as I could judge, fixed her eyes on the Russian. But I inferred this more from the aspect and position of her face, for the blue spectacles made it impossible for me to see the eyes. She put a few hurried questions to Prevboski in the Russian language, and he answered her as rapidly; and I was conscious that her anxiety increased. On our way to the house I had mentioned

my suspicions to him, and it was evident he was influenced by them, for with a sudden and adroit movement he snatched at Madame's grey hair, partly tearing it away, and revealing the fact that it was a wig. With a wild cry of alarm the niece sprang between them, and, throwing her weight against him, hurled him back, while the *pseudo* Madame Lablanc got between us and the door, and, drawing a revolver, covered us, while a look of despair and stern determination was on her haggard face, or rather his face, for we had found Treskin, and the niece, as was soon made manifest, was his loyal and devoted wife.

"Do not attempt to touch me," he cried in a half-frantic tone, "or, as the sky is above, you are dead men."

The tableau was certainly a dramatic one, for this desperate, hunted man was not likely in such a moment to be influenced by any thought of the after consequences if his threat was carried into effect. My companion and I were certainly at a disadvantage, for between us and Treskin stood his beautiful wife; unarmed, it was true, but ready to sacrifice herself if needs be. If we made a rush at him, we would have to hurl her out of the way, and in the brief seconds required for that, Treskin could send his bullets speeding. There was the chance, of course, of his missing; or, on the other hand, of his hitting her or us. Anyway, we wished to avoid a tragic ending to this dramatic affair; but before we could take action, Treskin backed to the door, opened it, and backed out, while his wife covered his retreat. Then, acting in concert, Prevboski and I darted forward, and gained the passage in time to see the unfortunate man disappearing up the stairs, and in a few moments a door slammed violently.

We followed with all speed, and hammered on the door of the front bedroom, where he had sought refuge. Suddenly the door was flung open, and Treskin, stripped now of his false hair and blue spectacles—which, by the way, were as much of a necessity as part of his extraordinary disguise, for he suffered from some affection of the eyes—stood in the threshold. There was no anger, no fire, no passion in his face; it was a wonderfully gentle, mild face, and more like a woman's than a man's.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a voice that was heart-cutting in its pathetic sadness. "I yield myself your prisoner. It is useless my fighting against the stars or trying to avert my destiny. I have been a fool to suppose I could long elude the scent of the Russian bloodhounds. But I am a political refugee, and the English Government dare not give me up. You must give me a little time to collect my papers, to put my affairs in order, and to console my beloved wife, whose devotion to me is worthy of being immortalized in an epic poem." Turning to me he handed me the revolver, which up to this moment he had held with his finger on the trigger, and he said, "You have done your work well, and lured me into a trap; but I suppose it is your business, therefore I will not blame you. You are an Englishman, however, I presume, and I may therefore look for fair play at your hands. I could expect none from this man," looking contemptuously at Prevboski; "he would treat me as if I were a wild beast."

I hastened to assure Treskin that he would receive every consideration, and his first act was to descend the stairs in search of his wife, whom he found lying in a swoon on the floor of the room. Bending down, he raised her with an infinite tender-

ness, and as he kissed her white face he sobbed like a stricken child. A man who could weep over a woman, as he wept then, could have very little of the savage in him. I am not ashamed to own that it affected me, and I was obliged to turn away. But Prevboski looked on with stolid indifference, and grunted out an expression of impatience.

An hour later we conveyed the unfortunate Treskin to prison, and so far my part ended. The disguise that he had assumed and so well kept up had thoroughly deceived everyone not in his secret, and he had been able to earn a good income by his linguistic accomplishments. He had been married to his English wife about a year. She was the daughter of highly-respectable people, who had made a small fortune in business and retired. Her love and devotion to her wretched husband were of that nature which passeth words; and, with an eloquence of a broken-hearted woman, she pleaded his cause in the public press and told the moving and pathetic story of his life, every detail of which was subsequently confirmed. But, notwithstanding this, and in spite of an almost universal protest, he was given up and conveyed to Russia with Prevboski—the poor, grief-stricken wife accompanying him; for no persuasion, neither on his part nor on that of her relatives, could prevent her from sacrificing herself, for truly it was a sacrifice.

As most people are aware, it is not an easy matter for anyone here to follow the career of a prisoner in Russia, for the ways of the Russian prison administration are mysterious and dark, few outsiders are able to learn what goes on behind the iron bars and the ponderous doors which all too securely guard the victims of so-called justice. But from special sources of information I ascertained

after a considerable time that Treskin was kept for a whole year in prison before he was brought up for trial. Then it was a hideous mockery to try him, for his brain had given way, and he was far gone in consumption. Nevertheless, be it told to the eternal disgrace of those who were responsible for it, he was sentenced to banishment, his destination being Northern Siberia. In due course he started on the dismal and dreadful journey, accompanied by his heroic wife. But when the Ural Mountains had been crossed he was in a dying state. He had, indeed, been dead to the world for some time, for his mind had quite gone. He was left behind in an *étape*, where he lingered for a few weeks, and then departed to where man's persecution could no longer affect him. His wife, who had so far borne up with heroic fortitude, broke down utterly crushed and shattered beneath the blow, and in a moment of unbearable sorrow she put an end to her own wrecked life. It is a pitiable story, and I end as I began by saying bitterly indeed do I regret that ever I played any part in the taking of Treskin.

LABOUR LOST.

THE STORY OF A SCHEME THAT MISCARRIED.

EVERYONE who lays claim to the possession of even ordinary powers of observation, must frequently have been struck by the way in which mere chance seems to influence and control the lives of human beings. Some trifling and unforeseen circumstance has often been the means of entirely changing one's destiny. Read the histories of prominent men and women, kings and queens, statesmen, lawyers, clergymen, authors of both sexes, of soldiers, and sailors, and it will have to be admitted that "chance" is a factor in the human sense which frequently upsets all our calculations. It will, of course, be admitted that "chance" is but another name for luck, good or bad as the case may be, and people may be found who deny the existence of such a thing as luck; but Professor de Morgan, who was one of the greatest of mathematical writers this century has produced, and whose classic on "The Theory of Probabilities" is too well known to need more than a passing reference here, was firmly convinced that some people were born naturally lucky and others unlucky. He himself says, "The assertion that there is something in luck is one which I do not think of questioning"; nor will any other man think of

questioning it unless he is singularly obtuse, or singularly blind to the signs that come in his way. Indeed, if anyone who has read thus far will pause to take a retrospective glance at his own life he will perhaps be surprised to see how often that life has been influenced by what appears as strokes of bad or good luck. My story will, I think, lend peculiar point to the foregoing argument, which has an undeniable appositeness to what I have to tell. I might with perfect justification of the title have called this story "By the Spin of the Halfpenny," for it was due to the twirling of that humble coin of the realm that the events I am about to narrate were brought about.

It chanced one summer in the distant past that I was rustivating with a dear friend in the historic precincts of the grand city which has not inaptly been dubbed the "Modern Athens" by some enthusiastic Scotsman. The natural beauties of its situation no one can deny, but there are certain architectural excrescences which detract a good deal from its artistic beauty. Nevertheless, Edinburgh has a fascination all its own, and is particularly attractive in the long, warm days, when blue skies and bright sunshine lend a charm to even the most squalid of places. The friend I allude to has long since been numbered with that mighty majority of the human race, between whom and us is the mystery of unbroken silence, and which oft prompts the lonely-hearted to dumbly exclaim :

" Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still ! "

The grip of my friend's hand was that of an earnest, genuine man ; and his cheery voice was like the mellow strains of a silver flute. We had been

long "acquaint", and we had wandered through many strange lands, and seen many strange scenes together. Ah! and alas! how evanescent are the joys and pleasures of life, and all too soon we gaze with tearful regret on the white tombstones of our dear ones dead and gone! But I must not moralize, though the temptation to do so is strong when one remembers companionships that Death has destroyed. Well, my friend and I had been spending some delightfully pleasant days in the northern city, when, as we were lounging and enjoying our matutinal pipe, after a hard day's work the previous day, he suddenly exclaimed, with the easy familiarity warranted by long and tried friendship, which had been unmarred by even the lightest rift or the tiniest shadow:

"I say, Dick, old fellow, what are you going to do to-day?"

"Loll and dream, for I am tired," I answered.

"Bosh," said he, with his wholesome laugh, "You'll do nothing of the sort. I shall carry you off somewhere."

"No, you won't, dear boy, I'm in for a day's laziness."

"You are in for a day's outing," he returned. "The balmy atmosphere and bright sky woo one to Nature's bosom. That touches you? Eh?"

I asserted with emphasis what he already knew, that I was one of Mother Nature's most devout of worshippers; but I added that there were times, owing to the weakness of the flesh, when even a devotee preferred the dreamy indolence of the lotus-eater to the toil of the pilgrim; and at that particular moment, and in that particular instance I wished to sup of the drowsy mandragora and see visions.

"By Jove," he cried cheerily, "when a fellow talks of seeing visions it's a sign that he is growing mentally weak. Now, then, I'm going to take you off to Stirling, thence we'll do a tramp across the Trossachs, and as we go I'll read out '*The Lady of the Lake*' to you, for it's one of my favourites, and I'm letter perfect in it. That will clear the cobwebs from your brain, and you'll talk no more of visions unless it be visions of the beautiful '*Lady of the Lake*.'"

"Get thee behind me, tempter of tempters," I growled. "I fain would be alone, and yet you tempt me with a song of enchantment, and I am weak."

"Aha, you yield," he exclaimed.

"No, I am as inflexible as tempered steel."

"The spin of a coin of the realm shall decide it," said he. "Are you on?"

"Yes. I cry 'heads,' and I'm sure to win."

He drew forth from his pocket a halfpenny, tossed it into the air with a dexterous jerk of the thumb, and let it fall upon the table.

"It's tail," he roared, as the coin settled, and so it was. "The fates are against you; so stir yourself. There is a train in half an hour, and see to it that the tobacco pouch is well filled. Fail at your peril. Come, time and trains wait for no men. At least trains do sometimes, but not for humble men like us."

Who could resist such a delightful despot as he was? I therefore tacitly complied with his imperious command, and having procured my hat and stick and light overcoat, we set off to the station, and soon were enjoying that superb view which is seen from the "Queen's Seat" on the wall of Stirling's ancient Castle. If we had ordered weather to our own

liking, we could have had nothing better than the sample we were favoured with on that glorious day. A few fleecy clouds that resembled nothing so much as drawn out white wool, flecked the azurine sky, and there was a clearness—a plate-glass-like atmosphere, not often experienced in the northern regions of the kingdom. The passionate larks soared upwards with a burst of melody that seemed to gush forth like a flood, filling the palpitating air; and mingling with it was the rythmical murmur of flowing water, while the senses were lulled with the aroma of the scented breeze that blew over vast expanses of field and wood. My friend felt the influence of these things as much as I did, for deep in his manly heart was a rich vein of pure sentiment that found its expression in a worshipful silence, and so we spoke not, but gazed dreamily over the quivering landscape, each thinking the thoughts that were in accord with his respective temperaments, and the particular mood of the hour. Suddenly our dream was broken by the soft voice of a woman exclaiming—"Isn't it lovely!"

The "lovely" jarred upon my senses, for it is a verbal barbarism for which women are responsible; and turning I beheld a gaily dressed pretty woman of about twenty-five in the companionship of a sour-visaged, dark complexioned man upon whom she was leaning with her gloved fingers of both hands interlocked about his arm, and her brown eyes fixed on his face as if she were pleading to him to at once endorse her verdict with regard to the "loveliness" of the landscape over which the wand of summer had been passed, and called forth all its innate beauty, until in colouring, artistic finish, and detail, it presented a perfect picture of living nature.

The man was forty if he was a day. His hair

was cut close, and mingling with its almost jetty-blackness, were grey streaks. His cheeks and chin were clean shaved; but a grey-streaked moustache drooped not ungracefully over his lips. His face was not a good one. There was a shifty foxiness in the dark eyes, and a certain cast of feature not altogether easy to describe, which irresistibly suggested an evil, a plotting mind. As you looked at him, and took in the points of his physiognomy you could not associate him with a rugged, frank, outspoken disposition.

You who are disposed to deny that something—and a big something too—of the human mind cannot be read in the first glance you get of a face must have studied your fellow-men to little advantage. Although I could lay no claim, even in the smallest degree, to the wonderful gift which distinguished the renowned Lavater, I had, both intuitively and by experience, the power of drawing certain more or less accurate deductions from expression, contour, and detail of the face. And so I found myself studying this man until I was sure of two things. Firstly, that he was an enemy to well-ordered society; secondly, that at some time or somewhere I had looked on him before.

His style of dress was flashy and vulgar. The cut of his trousers—tight at the knees, bell-shaped at the bottom—clearly indicated the coarse and narrow understanding which is utterly incapable of distinguishing between meretricious gaud and true art. He wore a loud crimson necktie, held in position by a jewelled ring, the jewels of which might or might not have been genuine; it was impossible to tell from that distance. He had rings on his fingers also—far more than any man of refined taste would care to wear. His coat was a rakish, cheap-cut garment,

and on his gaudy, speckled waistcoat reposed a massive, cable-patterned chain, with numerous seals pendant therefrom. He wore a broad-brimmed, soft felt hat that was posed not ungracefully on his head, and which served in a minor degree to redeem the vulgarity of his personal appearance.

If I had been asked there and then to have passed a verdict upon this individual I should have said that he possessed within him the *prima materia* of an unprincipled adventurer; one who had no respect for the laws of *meum* and *teum*; and to whom—given a certain concatenation of circumstances—human life would have had no sacredness.

As the well-known proverb "Birds of a feather flock together" expresses an irrefragable truth, I need only say at this juncture the lady who accompanied him was neither his superior nor his inferior. She was on a level with him. I have remarked that she was pretty. So she was, but it was a coarse prettiness that would only bear looking at as a whole and not in detail. By the law of affinities she had been drawn towards him by having something in common, that something existing in a similarity of tastes, ideas, and aspirations. The relationship in which they stood to each other was in one sense not difficult to determine. They were lovers; that was evidenced in her pose, her look, her general manner, and they had the appearance of a very newly-married couple on their honeymoon tour.

Now, having surveyed and weighed, so to speak, this commonplace couple, and drawn my own inferences as to the value they were likely to set on the rules of ethics generally recognized by well, self-governed people, I might have dismissed them from my mind, and turned to the more agreeable contemplation of the superb panorama which engirt us round

about, and was enhanced in picturesqueness by the hoary towers of the time-stained castle, had it not been for the fact that the man's face awakened some dormant memory. It was a phantom memory—as intangible as a phantom, as fugitive as a phantom. I had seen the face before, but where, when, and under what circumstances I could not possibly recall just then. When your brain is filled with many photographs of people you have seen and known at some far-off time you cannot always put your finger on any particular one that happens to have become faded and dingy by the lapse of time, and say, "That is So-and-so," and fix the date of your meeting.

The man replied to the woman's remark by saying:

"Yes, it ain't bad; but I want some grub. I'm precious hungry."

Then he looked down into her upturned face with an endearing expression, and they moved away.

For some moments I stood gazing after them with an aroused curiosity, and trying to drag forth from the storehouse of my memory something wherewith I might identify the gentleman. Suddenly like a flash of light the remembrance I sought came to me. He was by birth a Welshman, whose real name was Llewellyn Jones, but who passed under many aliases. I had been largely instrumental in bringing him to book many years before for an audacious forgery, and as he had been previously convicted he received sentence of a long term of imprisonment. As I recalled this I further remembered that he was regarded as a clever and daring rascal, who flew at big game.

"What is he doing here?" I asked myself. "What is he up to? Has he just married that woman? Does she know the life he has led? Is she an

innocent dove that has been lured into the fowler's net? "

I had little hesitation in answering "No" to the latter question. She was not dressed in the plumes of a dove, nor were her features expressive of a dove's guilelessness. It was infinitely more likely she was a helpmate in the fullest sense, and that she was willing to follow him in his course, whether for good or ill. Ill it would be no doubt, for a man ingrained with rascality as he was was not in the least likely to suddenly turn saint.

It may be imagined that I was more than ever interested in these people now that I had determined his identity, and I resolved to learn something more about them. If he was leading an honest life well and good. There would be no harm done, since he would be unaware of my solicitude about his welfare, and if it were otherwise I might be able to render some service to the State by spoiling his plans if they were opposed in any way to the law. My friend had drawn from his pocket a small sketch-book, and was amusing himself—he was very clever with the pencil—by rapidly sketching in outline little bits of the landscape, so I turned to him and said:

"I will leave you here for a while. I want to try and solve a riddle. I will be back soon. Wait for me."

He merely nodded an assent to my request, for he was absorbed in his amusement, and I moved off in the track of Jones and his companion. I sighted them just as they were going out of the Castle gateway, and followed them to an hotel, where I soon ascertained they were staying under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Cotswold. They had arrived the previous night, and had intimated their intention of departing on the morrow. They had come down

from Edinburgh, and from inquiries they had made it was gathered that they intended to pursue their journey through the Trossachs, and proceed to Glasgow. The manager of the hotel regarded them as a newly-married couple, as they seemed very loving to each other, and Mr. Cotswold was looked upon as a man of some importance, inasmuch as he had received numerous telegrams although he had been there so short a time. "Numerous telegrams" was evidently a standard of respectability and importance, according to the views of that particular hotelkeeper.

Of course, I breathed no word of suspicion against the reputation of "Mr. Cotswold," who was considered to be a good customer, for he had ordered wine freely the night previous at his dinner. But I telegraphed in cipher to certain official quarters asking if any information could be given me concerning Llewellyn Jones, who had been convicted of forgery. In due course I received for answer the following:—"Nothing at present known of Jones. He was duly discharged after serving his sentence, and is supposed to have left the country."

In the meantime, that is between the despatch of my telegram and receipt of the answer, I had returned to my friend who had been anxiously waiting for me, as he was bent on a pedestrian tour. But I explained to him the little business I had in hand, which was either to justify my suspicions or satisfy myself that Llewellyn Jones *alias* Cotswold was leading an honest life. So my friend yielded to my request that we should only make a short stroll, and return to the hotel in time for dinner. On getting back from our walk I found the telegraphic answer to my question awaiting me, and if it did nothing else it proved that for the time being at least Mr. Jones had passed from the ken of the people who,

it might be supposed, had some interest in keeping an eye upon him.

It must not be forgotten by those who are disposed to think that there was no justification for watching Jones that he came into the category of an habitual criminal, that the law of averages was all in favour of an habitual criminal, after a long term of imprisonment, reverting to his old ways. For my own part, I was morally certain that Jones was still a dangerous person. But under any circumstances, if for no other reason than that of gratifying an idle curiosity—if you so will it—I was determined to know what Jones's little game was. When I had last brought him to book he had been described as "a single man," and there was every reason to believe that description was accurate.

Now, however, it appeared as if he had joined issues with one of the opposite sex, and had united his destiny to hers; and as I felt certain she belonged to the same *genre* as he did, it seemed to me in the highest degree probable that when two evil things came together evil would be the result. So as I had time on my hands I thought I could not spend it better than by trying to discover how Jones got his income. It was a very interesting problem, and one which—in the interest of truth and right—was well worth solving.

During the afternoon "Mr. and Mrs. Cotswold," were absent; they hired a carriage and pair, and went for a long drive. That act argued that they had a well-lined purse; and the argument was strengthened by the little incident which I learnt casually that that very morning Mr. Jones, or Cotswold, as he called himself, had obtained change for a twenty-pound Bank of England note at the bar of the hotel. Now, was it not a legitimate question to ask :

"How was it that this man—a convicted forger—who had but recently come out of prison, was so well provided with money?"

The question was one which I felt ought to be answered correctly, and I resolved that I would answer it. I was no longer desirous of dreaming the dreams of the lotus-eater; nor of enjoying the drowsiness, begotten of the potent mandragora. All my faculties were keenly alert. I had been suddenly presented with a problem, which was well calculated to afford me the keenest interest, and I settled down to my self-imposed task with a feeling, that if it was not enthusiasm that spurred me, it was something very much like it. My friend and I passed the afternoon in strolling about, and he having the artist's love of the beautiful, watched with rapt admiration the western sun working out prismatic effects of colour, as it slowly sank in the fervid sky, and—

"Turned the cloddy earth to glittering gold."

It was all very beautiful. The sky was a burning glory of fretted fire, and in the amber light the inanimate things of earth seemed transfigured and to take on a splendour, until there was suggested to the beholder—at least to me—those wonderful and daring flights of genius which Martin gave evidence of when he gave to the world his great picture—The Plains of Heaven. Gradually the colours faded and the purple of the gloaming stole softly over the scene. Then we rose from the mossy bed on which we had been reclining, and made our way back to the hotel, which we reached as a noisy gong was calling the hungry to dinner.

A goodly company in point of numbers sat down to the *table d'hôte*, and my friend and I secured

seats on the opposite side of the table to that at which Jones and his wife sat. I had reason to suppose that there was no likelihood of Jones recognizing me, for when I ran him down on the last occasion I had scarcely ever come in personal contact with him, and my plan was to endeavour to draw him into conversation after dinner, when the gentlemen retired to the smoking-room—I had already ascertained that he was a smoker—and by means of carefully guarded questioning find out, if it could be done, where he was domiciled, and if he was really on his honeymoon tour. A little incident, however, that occurred during the dinner-time, saved me the necessity of that course, and here again the law of chance or luck—call it what you will—favoured me.

When the dinner was about half over a waiter brought in a letter to Jones, who, with manifest eagerness, tore open the envelope, unfolded the letter, perused it with a gratified smile, whispered something to his wife as he handed the letter to her to read. She too read it with a smile of gratification, and they exchanged looks, which indicated unmistakably that the information contained in the letter afforded them complete satisfaction. The woman then returned the paper to her husband, who at once proceeded to tear it and the envelope into pieces, which he cast behind him into a fireplace, which, for the nonce, had been turned into a little arbour of living plants in pots. When the dinner had ended, and the guests departed, I strolled round to that fireplace, picked up every shred of the torn paper, and slipping them into my pocket-book I went to the bedroom I had engaged for the night. Then lighting the candle I sat down at the table, and arranged all the pieces in their proper order. This, as may be supposed,

was not done without a considerable amount of trouble, but when at last I succeeded in my task I found that the envelope bore the Manchester postmark and the date of the previous day, and the superscription was :

JOHN COTSWOLD, Esq.,
Royal Hotel,
Stirling, N.B.

The letter itself was written in cipher, of which the following is a copy:—

122 9* 4522 (14) — — +5 *297 — — 5* —

*97(14) — 6 *⊖* 939 — (14) *⊖335* * 9

+9(14) □ 9* 35. — 19(14) 4922 9. — 355 $\frac{2}{4}$ (14) —

6⊖. +5. ⊖(14) — 92 v — ⊖ .5 — ⊖. (14) —

It will be seen from this table that there were nineteen signs. 9 was repeated eleven times, and the next highest was *, while v, $\frac{2}{4}$, and — only appear once. Now, as everyone knows, amongst the most frequently used characters in the English language

are E and I, and bearing this in mind I felt that I had got the key to the enigma.

1	.	.	.	.	.	2
2	.	.	.	.	.	8
9	.	.	.	.	.	11
*	.	.	.	.	.	10
4	.	.	.	.	.	2
5	.	.	.	.	.	9
(14)	.	.	.	.	.	8
I	.	.	.	.	.	6
I	.	.	.	.	.	6
+	.	.	.	.	.	3
7	.	.	.	.	.	2
—	.	.	.	.	.	1
6	.	.	.	.	.	2
⊖	.	.	.	.	.	5
√	.	.	.	.	.	1
•	.	.	.	.	.	5
9	.	.	.	.	.	2
3	.	.	.	.	.	5
$\frac{2}{4}$	.	.	.	.	.	1

Let me proceed to explain. I noted that 9 occurred most frequently, and * followed next in order. As E is more frequently used than I, I tried E to begin with, thus :

E 2 2

Now came the question, what did the 2 stand for? I tried various combinations without getting any further. The twenty-second letter of the alphabet being V, wouldn't fit in. Then it flashed upon me that the 2 was probably used as a divisor, and L being

the twelfth letter in the alphabet the 2 might stand for it. Twice 6 being 12, I therefore got the word—

E L L

That, however, conveyed no intelligible meaning; but the double L suggested naturally that A should be substituted for E, when the word

A L L

appeared. Assuming that to be correct, it was clear that as A was the first letter of the alphabet it was represented by 1. This helped me on, and I at once jumped to the ninth letter, which, of course, is I. But now I was perplexed by the *, which was a frequently-used sign. Yet it evidently did not represent E, so I tried N T F; but having regard to the number of times it was repeated in the cipher, S seemed the most likely, and it gave me—

ALL IS

In order to determine the next word—and having discovered that 2 stood for L—I wrote down the following—

ALL IS LL

The points represented the missing letters, which I at once filled in by W E.

ALL IS WELL.

Here I had a perfectly intelligible phrase, and it determined that W and E were represented by 4 and 5. "But, why," I asked myself, "did 4 stand for W, and 5 for E?" The vowel was the 5th in the alphabet, but W certainly wasn't the fourth. "Yes, it is," I mentally exclaimed. "It is the fourth

from the last letter, and as I could account for the 4 in no other way, I was content to let it stand so.

After a little puzzling I took (14) to stand for a single letter, and N being the fourteenth in the alphabet I got this sentence—

ALL IS WELL. N

Two letters were wanted to follow the N, and it was necessary that one should be a vowel, and by trying all the vowels I hit upon O, which at once suggested T, which gave me the word *not*. The next following in the cipher was +5. Knowing that 5 stood for E, I put down the sentence—

ALL IS WELL. NOT E

It was difficult to find a single letter that would make sense, so that it seemed pretty clear + must represent two letters, and after various trials I was sure it was TH.

ALL IS WELL. NOT THE

Knowing what S L and I were represented by, I was now enabled to expand the sentence :

ALL IS WELL. NOT THE SLI TEST

G H were evidently the letters wanted here to fill in the blanks, so I had *slightest*, and now knowing the signs which stood for the G H, I was helped on considerably. Let us see now what we can make of it.

ALL IS WELL. NOT THE SLIGHTEST SIGN O.

Here it was obvious that a letter was wanted where the dot is, and F seemed the most suitable, so we get *of*, and the expansion can be proceeded with :

ALL IS WELL. NOT THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF
S S I ION.

The context was of great aid here, for could it suggest anything but *suspicion*?

ALL IS WELL. NOT THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF SUSPICION.

We at once see that U is represented by \ominus and P by \circ With this knowledge the next word was easy enough.

ALL IS WELL. NOT THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF SUSPICION.
SUCCESS I THIN.

No one could be blind to the necessity of putting K after the *thin*, which turned it into *think*; K being represented by \square , we are now able to read:

ALL IS³ WELL. NOT THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF SUSPICION.
SUCCESS, I THINK, IS CE TAIN.

Here we discover that the sign is R. It was now only necessary to determine the meaning of $\frac{2}{4}$, the figure 6, and V, to read off the whole of the cryptograph; and I took it that $\frac{2}{4}$ stood for the second fourth letter, that is the fourth from A, which of course gives us D; while 6 in the order of things would be F, and V was Y with the tail cut off, so the communication ran thus:

ALL IS WELL. NOT THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF SUSPICION.
SUCCESS, I THINK, IS CERTAIN. WILL PROCEED NO
FURTHER UNTIL YOU RETURN.

Eureka! I cried, as I thus solved the secret which had so strangely come into my hands. The cryptograph was by no means a difficult one, though it took a little time to puzzle out; but having once

got the keynote the rest was easy, as will be seen when the cipher and the solution are read together.

all is well not the slightest
 122 9* 4522 (14) → +5 *297 → 5* →
 sign of suspicion success I
 *97(14) → 6 *⊕ *939 → (14) *⊕ 335** 9
 think is certain will proceed
 +9(14) ⊠ 9* 35. → 19(14) 4922 9. → 355 $\frac{2}{4}$
 no further until you return
 (14) → 6⊕. +5. ⊕(14) → 92 7 → ⊕ .5 → ⊕ (14)

With the knowledge I possessed of the antecedents of Llewellyn Jones—or Cotswold, as he now called himself—this cipher letter was not to be ignored. It was pregnant with a great meaning; and to my way of thinking pointed unmistakably to villainy. This decided me on the course to take, and I resolved to watch him. The following day by arrangement my friend returned to Edinburgh to square up at the hotel and forward me on my luggage, and I kept in the wake of Jones and his wife as they proceeded through the Trossachs to Glasgow, where they put up at a temperance hotel. Their next movement was a trip down the Clyde to Arran and back, and after two days spent in Glasgow they left by the night train for Manchester, where I soon found out they had secured apartments in a very respectable house in Strangeways, kept by a widow lady named

Higginbottom, who took in lodgers as a means of livelihood.

Judicious inquiries elicited the fact that Jones had taken the apartments in the name of Cotswold. He represented himself as an engraver by trade; said he was going to be married, intended to make a honeymoon tour in Scotland, and on his return settle down to business. This was all Mrs. Higginbottom knew about him, and, of course, she believed his statements. In order that I might the better keep an eye upon Jones until I had satisfied myself that I was either right or wrong in my suspicions, I secured temporary lodgment in a house on the opposite side of the street, and from this coign of vantage I was enabled to watch him, nor had I long to wait for developments. A visitor called upon him; a powerfully built, thick-set, short man, who in general appearance was suggestive of a bull dog. And a little later the two men went out together, and proceeded to Salford, which is now a division of Manchester separated by the River Irwell, once a clear pellucid stream teeming with fish; for long a repulsive open sewer, and now within measurable distance of becoming a great waterway "for ships that cometh from the sea," as the Irwell is to form part of the Manchester Ship Canal.*

At the period I am dealing with, Salford was a most undelectable neighbourhood. For the most part the people who resided there were factory operatives, and the huge mills that gave employment to so many thousands of men, women, and children, ground away the lives of the poor operatives at the same time that they spun fortunes for the owners. Innumerable tall

* Since this was written the Canal has been opened throughout its entire length, and ocean-going ships are to be seen at Salford and Manchester.

chimneys poured forth dense suffocating clouds of black smoke which grimed and clagged everything, and hung over the place like a pall of death, as indeed it was; and what the smoke failed to do in the way of poisoning the atmosphere, the chemical manufactories completed.

Salford was, and, for aught I know to the contrary, is a dreadful place. Confining myself to the past tense, the people were a wretched lot; stunted of limb, pallid of face, and gloomy of disposition—as well they might be; for who can live for years in a poisoned, reeking, darkened atmosphere without being tainted with the gloom of his surroundings? In one of the most densely populated parts of the place, and in a narrow dingy street, stood a branch office of the Mid-Lancashire Banking Company. The company occupied these premises as temporary tenants, until a new building they were erecting in Chapel Street was completed. The street was a street of incongruities. There were huge factories with their smoke-emitting chimney shafts; howling wastes of plots of lands, which were made the receptacle for all sorts of rubbish, and were the playgrounds for the wretched, half-naked street arabs, and the miserable children who swarmed in the neighbourhood; there were several ramshackle hovels of houses where the fluff-covered, reeking, pale-faced operatives of the mills found shelter; and there were, here and there, many tumble-down wooden sheds which were used as storage places for carts, vans, and lumber of various kinds. There were a few hucksters' shops, and a farrier's forge. The bank premises stood at the corner of a narrow alley that was a thoroughfare to a parallel street, at the corresponding corner was a two-storied house of the style and build usually found in such a neighbourhood.

To this house I tracked my men one unusually dark and choking day. The atmosphere was suggestive of a greasy, filthy sponge that had been soaked in liquid mud and soot. Grime, grime, grime was everywhere, and not a ray of brightness to relieve the Dantesque gloom. A sickening odour of oily waste pervaded the air, while the senses were dazed and the very ground trembled with the awful roar and burr of the factory looms. It was truly a busy scene of toiling, sweating humanity, but oh, what a hive! How the wan toilers drooped and coughed as they passed along the black and muddy street, or bent wearily over the looms in the mills. In this part God's fair earth was polluted and damned in order that a few men might reap fortunes, while the labourers broke their hearts in the awful struggle to prolong their blighted lives from day to day.

As soon as ever I saw Jones and his companions enter that house I scented mischief. I found out by a little inquiry that the place had been occupied for something like three months by a man who gave the name of John Asquith, who lived alone, apparently, and was supposed to be a mechanic, though nobody knew where he worked. He allowed it to be understood that he had taken the house, which had been untenanted for a long time, in anticipation of being married shortly, and when he came to the neighbourhood, he brought with him a small cartload of ramshackle furniture. There wasn't much of it, as may be gathered from the fact that a donkey was able to draw the lot. Asquith was looked upon with some dislike, though I could get no better reason for this than that he did not associate with anyone, and was very reserved. There was an air of mystery about him that the humble folk of the neighbourhood did not

like ; for squalid, miserable, and unwholesome as they were, they were sociable folk, and given to telling each other their grievances ; to pouring their woes into each other's ears, and to learning all about each other's little petty affairs. They therefore tacitly resented anyone coming amongst them who was not as they were, and did not as they did.

When Asquith went first to live in the house he was visited occasionally, it had been noted, by a man and woman, who had been seen to go late in the afternoon and leave early in the morning, thereby raising the supposition that they had stayed all night. From the description I gathered of this man and woman I had not much doubt that they were Jones and his wife.

All this to my mind was gravely suspicious. Asquith had not rented the house for any legitimate purpose, of that I was convinced. Some conspiracy was going on ; some devilish plot being hatched, some cunning wickedness being worked out. Jones's previous record, and the cryptograph which I had succeeded in solving at Stirling made that pretty evident. Jones and Asquith were confederates, and the woman was in their confidence. Soon it began to dawn upon me what the conspiracy probably was, but until I had got good and reliable data to go upon I did not wish to take any action, or cause any alarm in the neighbourhood, and of course I was particularly anxious not to do anything calculated to frighten the birds into flight before my net was properly spread. Therefore my policy was a waiting one, no less than a watching one.

On the day in question Jones stayed a long time, and when he left night had fallen, the whirr of the machinery had ceased, the lights in the factories

were out, and weary workers had gone to the hovels that they called "home." I followed in his wake, and after traversing several streets he paused before an ironmonger's shop, and peered through the fog-blurred and dripping windows. Presently he entered the shop, and after a time emerged again, carrying with him a short, powerful pick and a spade. Then he made his way back to the house. All was silent; the neighbourhood seemed deserted now. The feeble gas lamps were powerless to penetrate far into the murk. From a distance they looked simply like dull, glowing spots on a black cloth. I took up my position at the entrance of the narrow court which formed the thoroughfare between the parallel streets, and of which I have already spoken. Not a living thing was visible, nothing was stirring, a silence like the silence of death had settled on the neighbourhood. You looked up, impenetrable darkness was there; you looked around, darkness still, hardly relieved by the points of flame which constituted the lamps. The windows of the house occupied by Asquith revealed nothing. They were evidently well shuttered. My ear applied to the door failed to detect any sound. But presently I spread out my pocket-handkerchief on the wet, slimy pavement of the court, and, kneeling down, placed my ear as near the pavement as possible and listened intently for some time. Then I got the sign I had been seeking, and, rising, hurried away to my residence, for my work was finished for the night.

Between ten and eleven the following morning I returned to the neighbourhood. The factories were in full blast, and from the various chimneys dense columns of smoke were rolling forth, while there was a clatter of iron-shod clogs on the greasy stones as the workers passed to and fro. All this, of course,

was a sign of life, and of the stir of life; of the beat of energy and the pulse of industry. But, somehow or other, those great factories seemed to me like huge Plutonian dungeons where human slaves toiled away their wretched lives spinning gold, in order that rich men might become richer and enjoy the fat and the fruits of the earth, while the spinners starved and rotted in an atmosphere which was as poisonous as the poison of upas trees or of the pestiferous air exhaled in the Javan "Death Valley," where not even a blade of grass will grow, and nothing that draws breath can live.

Entering the office of the Mid-Lancashire Bank, I asked to see the manager in charge, and, having sent him my card, I was presently conducted to his sanctum, which, what with bright fire and good furniture, was like an oasis in the midst of a blight-stricken wilderness. But even in that room there was the fluffy atmosphere, and the nauseating reek of oily waste. You couldn't get away from them so long as you were under the shadow of those roaring factories.

The manager's name was Thorpe. He was a little grey-headed gentleman, with a sad, sallow, and wrinkled face. He rose as I entered, and extended his hand to me, while a weary smile played about his mouth. He probably thought I wished to become a customer of the bank.

"What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?" he asked, as he pointed to a chair and resumed his own seat.

"Has it ever occurred to you, sir, that your bank might one day be robbed?"

He looked startled and stared at me. Then with a little laugh of uneasiness, said:

"Every bank no doubt is more or less liable to

such a contingency, but in most cases it is a remote contingency, for every possible precaution that human forethought can suggest is taken to safeguard the property a bank holds in trust."

"That I fully understand," I replied, "but it doesn't quite answer my question. What I wish to know is, if you have any fear that this particular bank may be robbed?"

He looked at me searchingly with his small, dull eyes, and then, with some peremptoriness, demanded to know why I questioned him. I hastened to explain who I was, and that I had some reason for believing that an attempt was being made to get into the bank. He smiled again—a sort of incredulous smile—as he answered me.

"This bank is unusually well protected," he said, "and I do not think any attempt would be successful. We established our branch in this particular neighbourhood for the convenience of the factory proprietors, who every week want large sums of specie in order to pay their hands, and, though we are only temporary occupants of these premises, pending the completion of our new place in Chapel Street, we have taken extraordinary means to protect ourselves."

"You have cellars below, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; but they have been made unusually strong."

"In what way, may I ask?"

"By an extra thickness of brickwork all round the walls, and then an iron sheathing inside that again."

"On what day of the week have you the most money in the vaults?"

"On Thursday, as Friday is the pay-day for the mill hands, and usually from fifteen to twenty thousand pounds are drawn out."

"Is all that in gold?"

"Well—mainly so. Sovereigns and half-sovereigns

principally, but of course we also provide a considerable amount of silver."

"How is the money brought to the bank?"

"In bullion boxes, which are conveyed here in charge of trusty servants and the assistant manager of our head office. The money is then placed in my charge, and only I and my confidential clerk have keys of the vaults. On Friday morning the money is brought up in bags as we require it."

Having listened to these particulars, I said to Mr. Thorpe:

"Now, sir, I don't wish to alarm you unnecessarily, but I have no doubt in my own mind that a very cunning and daring scheme is being worked out for gaining access to your vaults by someone who must be well acquainted with the fact that you keep a large sum of ready money down below every week end. I should like to frustrate that scheme, and will do so with your assistance, but I consider it of great importance that you should keep this matter secret for the present."

"But you have not yet furnished me with any proof of the accuracy of your assertions."

"If you like to remain here this evening after the bank closes," I answered; "together with your confidential clerk, and as many other people as you may think necessary, I will furnish you with proof, unless I am very greatly mistaken indeed. I suggest that you have two or three constables, and we shall have to remain a little time in the cellars."

The poor old gentleman looked so distressed that I felt quite sorry for him; and he took some time to ponder over my proposal before he answered me. Then as if he felt the responsibility to be a little too great for him he said:

"It seems to me that we ought to take my con-

fidential clerk into our confidence. He is a clear-headed man, and his suggestions and advice will be valuable."

Of course I assented, and the clerk was called in. His name was Griffin. He was between thirty and forty, with an intelligent face, and clear, searching eyes. I repeated to him what I had told his chief, and when I had finished Mr. Griffin said, addressing the manager:

"I think, sir, we should allow Mr. Donovan to guide us entirely in this affair. It is hardly likely he would make the statement he has made unless he had exceedingly good data to go upon. Nor is it advisable at this period that anyone else should be let into the secret, for the rascals who may have designs on the bank, if they get the slightest hint that they are being watched, will take fright at once and abandon the scheme. If we can take them red-handed so much the better, and the more crushing will be the defeat."

"Then what course do you suggest, Mr. Griffin?" asked the manager.

"Well, sir, since Mr. Donovan assures us that he can furnish us with proof, what I suggest is this:—You and I and Mr. Donovan should descend to the vaults whenever he likes."

"Very well," returned the manager; "let it be so. Then will you be here this evening, Mr. Donovan, after the bank closes?"

Assuring him that I would, and an hour being fixed, I went away. Necessarily I experienced some anxiety lest I should not be able to give him the assurance I wanted to give him, of the attempt that was being made to get into his cellars. When I saw Jones carry the pick and shovel into Asquith's house, it was, as it were, a handwriting on the

wall; and when I bent my ear to the greasy pavement of the court, and heard the dull thud of the pick as it was being used beneath, I was convinced my surmises were correct. The rascals were digging a tunnel beneath the pavement so as to open up a means of communication with the bank cellars. It was, of course, a very daring scheme, involving them in an immense amount of labour, and exacting unlimited endurance and patience. But the rascals had, no doubt, made their calculations very well. They had noted the juxtaposition of the house to the bank. The two buildings were separated merely by a narrow court. The conspirators had also made themselves well acquainted with the business of the bank, and learned that every week end a large sum of money was temporarily placed in the cellars, to be drawn on as acquired, in order that the toilers in the factories might receive their wages. If an entrance could only be effected into the cellars when the money was there, what a haul would reward the exertions of the daring thieves, who, with ordinary caution, might be able to get clear off with a fortune! I knew Jones to be an exceedingly clever rascal, with a great deal of business aptitude and knowledge, and, from what had already come to my knowledge, I could not doubt but that he was the leading spirit in the affair, and the whole scheme was possibly due to his genius; and had it not been for the truly extraordinary chance which enabled me to get on his track, his labour and ingenuity, unworthily as they were being employed, would have met with reward in the shape of success.

In accordance with the arrangement, I presented myself at the bank at the stated hour and found Mr. Thorpe and Mr. Griffin waiting for me. The manager was suffering from great agitation and

excitement, and I noted that he carried a ponderous oak stick with a formidable knob at one end, as though he thought he might suddenly be called upon to defend himself against a whole legion of robbers. Both he and his clerk were provided with a small but powerful lantern, and each had a key of peculiar construction to open the doors.

At the top of the stone steps that led down to the cellars was a stout iron-lined door, and that opened we were confronted with another door half-way down, and at the bottom of the steps was a solid iron door which might have defied the most industrious of burglars. When this last barrier had yielded to the legitimate keys, and had swung back on its powerful hinges, our nostrils were filled with a mouldy, damp smell like that which comes from a newly-opened vault where decaying humanity lies and rots. We advanced into the cellar. It was vaulted and paved with square flags, and the walls were sheathed with iron. It was almost impossible to breathe until the doors had been open for some minutes, as there was no other way of ventilation. When the three doors were closed the vault was air-tight, and I shuddered with a sense of horror as I thought of the hideous suffering anyone would endure who happened to get shut in accidentally. Ranged round in piles were oblong boxes, which were wonderfully suggestive of small coffins, but they contained that for which men sell their souls, and which endures when men have passed away and are forgotten.

Advancing to the end of the vault, the end nearest the basement of Asquith's house, we became very silent and listened with bated breath, our ears close to the iron-bound wall, and presently there came to us the dull but unmistakable sounds of a pick. The

rascals were at work, and from the distinctness of the sounds it was pretty evident that the burrow had reached within a short distance of the bank wall.

"What does this mean?" asked the manager with trembling lips and white face.

"It means," said I, "that two scoundrels, one of whom has already served a long term of imprisonment, are in league—and, for aught I know, there may be more in the plot—and are working industriously from the house at the corner there, to effect a secret entrance into these cellars. For what purpose I need scarcely explain, but men who have legitimate business with a bank do not usually construct a secret tunnel in order to get communication with the bank's strong room.

"My God! this is dreadful," groaned the poor manager, as he was overwhelmed with the sense of the responsibility that rested on his shoulders. "What is to be done?"

I smiled at his distress.

"Pray don't let the matter trouble you so much."

"Trouble me! How can I help its troubling me?" he exclaimed. "I have been a trusted and faithful servant for fifty years, and if this dastardly scheme succeeded I might be blamed for not having taken all due precaution to safeguard the treasure committed to my care."

"My dear sir," I answered him, "this is mere hypersensitiveness. Even suppose that I had not forewarned you, and the scheme had succeeded, how, in the name of common sense, could any blame attach to you?"

He groaned, and passed his thin hand through his scant grey hair.

"Well, what do you propose to do?" he gasped.

"The answer to that is clear. We must take

these rascals red-handed, then the punishment that will be meted out to them will be such that they will hardly have the chance again of working ill in this world. We will let them go on with their work, but under our secret surveillance. When the right moment comes we will adopt means to render their escape impossible, and they will find themselves caged like rats."

Mr. Thorpe was not altogether disposed to fall in with my suggestion. He seemed to think it would be better to at once make a police raid on Asquith's house, but as I pointed out to him that though there would undoubtedly be presumptive evidence of their guilty designs, an indictment might fail owing to the difficulty of affording legal proof that the prisoners intended to get into the bank. At any rate, so long as the fellows had the means of paying lawyers they could throw no end of difficulty in the way of the prosecution, and if lawyers are only paid they will employ all the powers of their wretched trade to prove the devil himself a maligned gentleman, and his character as white as driven snow.

Mr. Griffin quite supported my views, and so it was arranged that I was to be free to take any course I thought proper.

As we could do nothing more that night we left the cellars, carefully locking the doors after us, and I was glad to get into the upper regions once more, for bad as the oily, reeking air of the neighbourhood was it was preferable to the oppressive stuffiness of those vaults—the storehouse of so much wealth which had attracted the cupidity of Jones and his companion. But gold breathes not. Neither, damp, time, nor aught else can affect it. It endures for ever and ever, while man, who for the sake of the yellow dross will fiercely slay his

fellow, passes away after a brief span, and crumbles into dust.

My next step was to obtain a key that would fit the door of Asquith's house, and one day, having assured myself that no one was on the premises, I entered with one of the local police superintendents. We found a miscellaneous collection of tools of all kinds, including crowbars, picks, shovels, wedges, and the like. From the cellar a tunnel was being driven in the direction of the bank cellar, and the dirt and *débris* that was brought out was piled in all the lower rooms, and a little square backyard was full. We calculated that the workers had only about another yard to get through before being in contact with the bank walls, and to break a hole in the brickwork and the iron sufficiently large to admit of a man entering would be a comparatively light task to such desperate and determined men, who had not been deterred by many yards of solid earth and rock—for rock had been encountered, and had to be cleared away with the help of steel wedges and a sledge hammer wielded in a restricted space, and under great difficulty. Such industry and perseverance were well worthy of a better cause. But Jones & Co. were playing for a big stake, and after labour would come the reward. At least so they hoped, and so it might have been had my dear friend on that fateful day in Edinburgh not spun his halfpenny, which decided that I should go with him to Stirling.

Of course, we disturbed nothing whatever in Asquith's house, but left everything just as we found it, and from that day we arranged to have a nightly guard in the bank.

For three long weeks this vigilance was kept up. The progress of the workers was necessarily slow,

and they had to work under every possible disadvantage. At last, however, we were made aware that they had reached the basement wall, and the following night they made their attack upon it. The brickwork was soon broken through, and then they were confronted with the iron lining. That required different treatment to bricks and mortar, and we heard the scratching of a pair of callipers as a circle was traced on the iron, and this circle would have to be cut out. That part of the work required to be carried out as speedily as possible, for as soon as ever they broke through the iron their plot would be revealed to the first person who entered the cellar. The robbers, therefore, could only count upon a few hours in which to cut away the iron and carry off the boxes of money, and that would have to be done during the time that intervened between Thursday night and Friday morning, because it was on Thursday afternoon that the large amount of money was placed in the strong-room ready for the Friday morning's run; and it was hardly supposed that Jones & Co. were ignorant of that fact.

It was then Tuesday, but we did not relax our vigilance the following evening, though, as I anticipated, the workers did not work. On Thursday night I had with me six stalwart companions, and we concealed ourselves in the vault, ready and anxious for the *dénouement* of the startling little drama, while outside four plain-clothes constables were stationed, with instructions to keep a sleepless watch on Asquith's house. We were aware that the two men and Jones's wife were there that night, and we felt sure we should trap them so that escape would be impossible.

Within half an hour of the bank being closed the rascals commenced work with a drill. The process they adopted was to drill a series of holes all round

the line of a circle, by which means they would be enabled to remove the circular plate of iron, and thus have a large opening to enter and exit by. Steadily they worked; the drill pierced rapidly, and through the holes made the rays of the light they had shot in long pencils. Two hours passed. The excitement was intense, for we knew the supreme moment was at hand. At last the circular plate that had been cut out fell with a clang on to the floor, and through the opening came a flood of light from three or four lanterns suspended in the tunnel, and by that light we saw Jones and his brawny companion stripped to the waist, save for their flannel singlets, and looking grimy and sweaty after their labour, while behind them, with eager, curious face, was Mrs. Jones, who peered at the hole with anxious, greedy eyes. The wealth she had no doubt been dreaming of seemed to her now to be within grasp, and possibly visions of the things wealth can procure passed before her mental gaze.

Asquith came through the hole first, and as he wiped his perspiring brow with the back of his grimy hand he said :

“ Well, I’m glad that bit of work’s over anyway. It’s been a hard job, mate, eh? But the rhino’s ours; that’s something, and our plans have been so well made that before the sleepy cops can wake up we’ll clear out of the blooming country.”

“ All right, Jack; but don’t let’s waste time now,” called out the woman. “ Pass the stuff out. My fingers are itching to handle some of it.”

“ Don’t burst yourself, Liz. You always were so blarsted impatient. Let me get my breath first.” Here he pulled a flask out of his trousers’ pocket and took a long swig of its contents. That done, he smacked his lips, screwed on the top of the flask,

which he restored to his pocket, and then, telling Jones to hand him a jemmy which was lying on the ground, he advanced into the cellar, and proceeded to prise off the lid of one of the bullion boxes. That was soon done, and his great strength—for he was a powerful man—enabled him to carry the box to the opening, and Llewellyn Jones and his wife at once began to fill a sack they had brought with them with the sovereigns the box contained. Now had come our moment of action. At a signal from me, my men sprang forward and pinned Asquith, though he struggled and fought desperately. The shock of our sudden appearance caused Jones's wife to drop down in a dead faint, while he, with a cowardly regard for his own safety only, fled, but only to fall into the hands of the watchers outside the house.

The stupefying amazement, the chagrin, the exasperation of these men, when they found that the result of all their months of labour was lost, may be far better imagined than described. Their plans had been well made, well carried out, and success must have seemed certain to them, as day by day they advanced in their work, and no doubt success would have crowned their efforts had it not been for the spin of the coin.

When the evidence against the man came to be worked up, it was found that Asquith's real name was Robert Cornwell. He was a native of Manchester, and the son of respectable people, who had formerly kept a broker's shop in Hulme, which is one of the divisions of Manchester. He had been a wild, reckless young man, however, and spent many years on the gold diggings of Australia, but had done no good for himself, and at last returned home. The woman was his sister. She had been in domestic

service, and had made the acquaintance of Jones one night at the theatre. There is reason to suppose that at that time she did not know anything of his shady career. At any rate through her intimacy with him he and her brother were brought together, and she, it would appear, readily lent herself to their schemes and plans. And a robbery committed at the house where she had been in service previous to marrying Jones—for married to him she was—was traced to her, and the money she thus secured enabled her and her husband to go on their little jaunt to Scotland. Thus their scheme was frustrated, and their labour was lost.

It is perhaps needless to say that each of them received a most exemplary punishment, though a desperate attempt was made to prove that the woman simply acted under the controlling influence of her husband. That plea might have had weight had it not been proved that she had been guilty of the robbery at the house where she had been in service.

HENGALD THE DREAMER.

For nearly three years there lived as a lodger in the house of a struggling artist named Hendrik Peterfield a lady who was known as Mrs. Sybil Felstead. For reasons that will presently be understood it is necessary that I should give some particulars about this lady. But first let me say that Mr. Hendrik Peterfield was a young married man, with a wife and two young children. He had come to London to seek his fortune as many another had done before him, and inclination no less than tastes had directed his footsteps to the classic neighbourhood of Hampstead, beloved alike by poet and artist. Peterfield was tempted to take a house beyond his means, and as he had little or no connection he had to eke out a miserable existence of genteel poverty by doing such work as he could obtain for book illustration and for illustrated papers. It was at the best but a sorry business, and between hunger and duns he'd a sore time of it, until one day the good fairy of struggling genius placed a stroke of good luck in his way. It is not always that she does this to those who tempt fate with pen or pencil, for as often as not struggling and unrecognized intellect starves and rots, and drops into its grave unknown and unsung. But it was not so in Peterfield's case, for at a moment when he was sunk into the depths of a dark despair owing

to his inability to meet the claims of sundry creditors, including a merciless landlord, who had given twenty-four hours' grace only for the payment of half a year's rent then overdue, a lady, elegantly dressed, stepped from a cab, and knocked at his door, induced to do so by a card in his parlour window, which set forth that "apartments" were to let. He had resisted for a long time the temptation to resort to this questionable mode of increasing his income until his wife had persuaded him that, for the children's sake, he ought not to be ashamed of doing anything honest that would be likely to bring in the means to enable him to pay his way. So, with a sigh, he yielded; the card was placed in the window, and almost the first applicant for particulars of the apartments was the lady in question, who at once described herself as "Mrs. Sybil Felstead."

She stated that being somewhat delicate in health, she had been advised to remove from Kennington, in the south of London, where she had been living for six years, and try the more bracing air of the northern heights. She had been struck—so she said—by the picturesque appearance of Mr. Peterfield's house, and it really was a picturesque place, for it was an old-fashioned building, with two oriel bay windows in front. It stood in about half an acre of ground, and was partly covered with ivy and Virginia creeper, and the artist's wife, being a woman of taste and feeling, had the curtains and blinds at the windows very nattily arranged, while the garden in front was prim and neat. The most casual passer-by, if he had cared to note, must have been struck by the neatness of the surroundings, and he would probably have reflected that the people who resided in the old-time house were not without artistic feeling, and artistic feeling they had without doubt. These

little matter-of-fact details are touched upon, as they serve to show how like draws like, and had it not been for them the probabilities are Mr. Peterfield would have had the bailiffs in his house in a few days, and in his despair and wounded pride he might have done something desperate. As it was, the lady calling herself Mrs. Sybil Felstead expressed herself as "charmed" with everything—the apartments, the house, the artist and his wife, and their two children—and she announced her intention, if Mr. and Mrs. Peterfield were agreeable, to move in on the morrow.

The young people were not used to letting apartments, and in verity they were not what is termed "practical people." They had none of the huckstering spirit of the trader within them, and knew infinitely more of art—both of them—than they did of the world in general, and human nature in particular. Such people are apt to aim at living in an ideal world of their own creation, and so long as things go smoothly it's all right. But when they have to fight with the wolf and the tempter, and to deal with the pitiless spirit of greed, covetousness, selfishness, and other sins of the human heart, it is all wrong. Nevertheless, Mrs. Peterfield, although neither hucksterer nor mercenary, ventured to hint to Mrs. Felstead that in such cases it was perhaps not unreasonable to look for a reference, whereupon the elegantly dressed young lady smiled sweetly at what possibly she thought was the simplicity of the artist's wife, and, opening a Russian leather satchel she carried, she drew forth a cheque-book with the remark—"Perhaps the best reference I can give you is a cheque for a quarter's rent in advance."

As the rent she was to pay for the suite of rooms she had agreed to take was four guineas a week it

necessarily followed that a quarter, or thirteen weeks, would amount to the substantial sum of £54 12s. The artist and his wife both protested, but the lady was pressing, and they yielded. She declared that she was so charmed with the place and them that there was no fear of her removing in a hurry, and when they ventured to hint at possible contingencies she laughed sweetly again, and said she was quite prepared to take the risk. So the cheque was duly drawn out and left uncrossed, and, being on a city bank, providing that she really had an account there, the impecunious artist could possess himself of the money within an hour or so.

Now, dear captious reader, if there be any such amongst those who follow my narrative, and you, still more captious critic, if you are disposed to find fault with Mr. and Mrs. Peterfield for being thus easily satisfied, must make every allowance for the circumstances in which they were placed. And, moreover, they were not worldly people—in the objectionable sense of the word—and intending no evil themselves they suspected none in others. But whatever may be said or thought, the fact remains that the cheque was accepted, and then the lady proceeded to explain that she was very quiet, studious, fond of music, retiring in her habits, and not given to visiting much or receiving visitors. She further explained that she was married, though owing to reasons she could not state, but which were perfectly legitimate, she could not live with her husband for the time being, but that he occasionally visited her. Owing to a shyness, however, that was “an absolute disease with him,” he could not bear to be seen, and she expressed a politely-worded hope that when he came he might not be made the subject of prying curiosity. So, a tacit

understanding having been arrived at on this point, the lady took her leave until the following day, when she was to arrive and enter into possession of her apartments about four o'clock in the afternoon.

In the meantime Mr. Peterfield proceeded to the bank, presented the cheque, which was promptly honoured, and with, it is reasonable to assume, a heart that had lightened in a corresponding ratio to the increased weightiness of his purse, which had been so long well-nigh empty, he returned to the bosom of his family, and proceeded to the disbursement of some of the most pressing claims against him. Thus it seemed as if the shadow which had hung over his little household had lifted, and the sun of prosperity was about to break forth. The following day, near about the hour Mrs. Felstead had named, she drove up in a hansom followed by a four-wheeler, which was simply filled with her personal luggage, consisting of boxes and packages, and she carried in her arms an exquisite little flossy, silken-haired spaniel, the name of which—she told the Peterfields—was Glory. It was an original name for a dog, but Mrs. Felstead was not a commonplace person, and therefore there was no wonder that she avoided giving her pet dog a commonplace name; and, now, let me proceed to draw a pen and ink portrait of Mrs. Felstead. The words are not mine, but those of Peterfield, the artist, with only slight variation.

Her age—a very delicate point when dealing with a lady—could not have exceeded seven-and-twenty; she was *petite*, with a most engaging, ingenuous, and simple manner. If it be true that a woman's hair is her glory, then, indeed, Mrs. Felstead had every cause to be proud, for not only as regards length and quality was it unique; but it was of that rich,

very dark golden brown now rarely seen, and, furthermore, it was full of natural, wave-like ripples. She had a face that reminded one of an ivory-painted portrait, not only as regards its colouring, but its perfectness of contour and regularity of feature. From the purely picturesque point of view it lacked nothing. The mouth, the nose, the eyes, were a study. The eyes were violet. No other colour would accurately describe them. She had faultless teeth, and so wonderfully delicate was the colouring of the skin that Mrs. Peterfield, with the severe criticism of her sex in this respect, felt sure at first it was the result of art and not of nature. In a little while, however, she had to confess she had done her lodger an injustice in thought, for the lady used no meretricious aids to enhance the exquisiteness of her complexion. Her figure was lithe, supple, and willow-like, not altogether above the hypercriticism of severe art tastes, but sufficiently near perfection to satisfy ordinary people. She had small hands, small feet, and ears so delicately moulded that they could not have been improved upon. To use Mr. Peterfield's identical words, she was "an incarnate poem." Allied to this physical beauty was a taste that perfectly accorded with it. Vanity she had—what woman has not?—but she did not outrage the true canons of art by a *bizarre* style of dress. Her clothing was simple and chaste, and of the very finest quality. Her vanity chiefly displayed itself in a love for jewellery. She seemed to have rings and things for every day in the week, and she seldom wore less than half a dozen costly rings on her small white fingers at one time.

As regards the sensuous tastes of this dainty creature, they were in keeping. She had the most delicate appetite, and cared only for the most

æsthetic forms of food. She drank sparingly of the best of claret; occasionally she took a little champagne. She was lavish in her expenditure, and seemed to have ample means at her disposal. She paid promptly by cheque for everything that she ordered, and her wardrobe was so extensive that it would have more than sufficed for half-a-dozen ordinary women. She played splendidly on the piano, and sung in a low musical voice with great taste and feeling, often accompanying herself on the guitar, which she touched with the skill of an artiste. She was passionately fond of reading, poetry being her chief pabulum, but what was very unusual for a woman, she showed an extraordinary partiality for De Quincey.

To use a cant phrase—she never gave herself away. She was singularly reserved, with a dignified manner that seemed to silently resent anything approaching easy familiarity. She showed great fondness for the artist's children; and yet, in a sense, she kept them at a distance. If in any connection with her they presumed upon the license peculiar and allowed to all children, she instantly checked it. Within a few days of her taking up her residence in Peterfield's house, she remarked one day to Mrs. Peterfield, in a manner which seemed to imply that she had a deep design in the remark, but once having made it it was never again to be referred to.

"I am a sort of mystery. I know that most people think me so, and I want to remain so. I live in a world with which I am not altogether in accord, but I try to make a world of my own, and I live my life according to my own views. No one has a right to tear asunder the pages of that life, and hold them up to the vulgar gaze of the mean-spirited and hypocritical rabble, who eat, drink,

cozen, cheat, and while their hearts are rotten with lies and sin, bow down and mock Heaven with their prayers."

No wonder that simple-minded little Mrs. Peterfield was astounded at this original—as coming from one of her own sex—expression of sentiments, which embodied a philosophy far more masculine than feminine. But though she would have liked to have entered into an argument on the subject, not the slightest encouragement to that end was given, and thenceforth it was a dead letter, and Mrs. Felstead was allowed to remain a mystery. That is, no attempt was made, so far as the Peterfields were concerned, to draw aside the curtain and peep behind it.

Very soon the strange lodger showed that she was deeply interested in Peterfield's work, and when she learnt, as she did partly by inference and partly by obvious signs, that he embodied in his own proper person an illustration of the oft-told tale—genius struggling with poverty—she generously offered to lend him money. Pride and self-respect prevented him from accepting the offer, and then she commissioned him to paint her portrait, causing him unusual trouble with a fixed purpose. First she tried one pose, and didn't like it, and he was compelled to wipe out the work he had begun. Then she did not like the way she had arranged her hair, and when she saw it on the canvas she said: "Oh, that won't do; you must paint it over again." At last, however, he was allowed to finish the picture, and then she forced upon him a cheque for three hundred pounds; and when he insisted that it was far in excess of the value of his work she answered that as she had been a particularly unruly subject and wasted much of his time, it would have to be taken into consider-

ation, for she did not like to be under an obligation to anyone. It was gracefully and kindly done, clearly with a view to an avoidance of wounding the artist's susceptibilities. At any rate that was the construction I put upon her act, when all the details of the story gradually came to my knowledge in much the same way as I am chronicling them. And Peterfield could hardly be justly censured for allowing his liberal patron to thus assist him in his struggle to make a name, and to do his work without being subjected to the harassing effects of vulgar poverty. And now I come to the most delicate point in the story, but let no one judge hastily, for few will guess the truth or foreshadow the sequel.

For close on three years Mrs. Felstead resided with the Peterfields, and the affairs of the household went on smoothly and harmoniously. The strange lodger had certainly brought the artist better fortune. His worldly affairs had improved; his pictures were selling; he was becoming known. For two years or more Mrs. Felstead received a visitor—a male visitor; so much was known, but no one under that roof save herself ever saw him. She always admitted him. Probably he gave some signal which she understood. She occupied a front parlour, with the window facing the garden, and mayhap he tapped on the pane. He did not come regularly, and yet the inference was that she understood when to expect him. It was always dark when he arrived; sometimes he would stay for two or three hours; at others he would not exceed half an hour. She had always shown, rather by silence than otherwise, a strong desire that he should not be seen by the members of the household, or his presence known. The Peterfields, therefore, were careful not to cause her annoyance by displaying curiosity, and the servants—two of whom

were kept—had orders to avoid, if possible, coming in contact with the mysterious visitor. Thus things went on, as I have said, for more than two years, and Mrs. Felstead seemed perfectly happy and contented. If she was not as other women were, she was none the less charming. Peterfield and his wife indeed seemed to look upon her with feelings akin to a wordless admiration. His poetic and artistic fancy found in her a sort of ideal, in which apparently there was nothing base, nothing sordid, commonplace, or objectionable. Tender she was, and sweet of disposition, with a very womanly nature withal, and yet she was not as other women. The frivolities which her sex are generally supposed to find pleasure in had no attractiveness for her. She loved solitude; she shrank from the vulgar gaze; and in the companionship of Glory, her silken spaniel, she evidently found, in the absence of her lord, it may be presumed, all that she required. A passing word anent that same spaniel. He was as original and peculiar as his mistress, and seemed like her to love solitude. He showed no disposition, at any rate, to mix with his own species, and if by chance he was separated from his mistress, for even a brief time, he evinced the greatest uneasiness and distress. And in return for this attachment the gentle lady bestowed a ceaseless care, and lavished her caresses upon him.

In this way a period of time elapsed nigh on to three years, during which the strange lady had guarded her secrets so well that no one of the household knew anything more of her history than was known on the first day that she called about the apartments. It was testimony to her originality of character that she had been able to refrain so long from making confidants. Nine hundred and ninety women out of every thousand would certainly have opened their

hearts to the landlady, and have shown her some of its most precious secrets; for to women generally mutual confidences are as the breath of their nostrils, and though they may hate each other with a consuming hatred that finds no expression in words, they trust each other with their secrets, they exchange views on men and things, and above all they find in dress an evergreen subject of endless conversation. But Mrs. Felstead must have been made of very different stuff, for she was not a chatterer, and only on very rare occasions had she canvassed her landlady's opinion on some particular article of attire she happened to be wearing, and yet, to reiterate, she was not lacking in vanity. Of her hair she appeared to be particularly proud; and though it was always arranged with the most perfect taste, and with an apparent negligence, she spent hours in producing that very effect of negligent simplicity. Then again, her extensive wardrobe afforded her an ever varying change of costume, and seeming to tire soon of her things she was constantly discarding them and buying new ones, and the cast-off ones were bestowed upon Mrs. Peterfield for that lady's children, or to be used in any other way Mrs. Peterfield might think proper. It was noted that the strange lodger always adorned herself with the most exquisite taste on those evenings when her lover or lord came to visit her. She would wear flowers in her hair, and flowers on the bosom of her dress, and the faint odour of violets she exhaled told of the perfume she used.

It chanced at last one night that Mr. Peterfield was approaching his house up the little front garden, when, just as he reached the steps, which were overshadowed by a portico and lighted by a suspended globular gas lamp, the door suddenly opened and a man came down the steps hurriedly. He passed Peterfield without

sign or word, and disappeared into the darkness. The man was the mysterious visitor who for so long had come and gone without being observed. It may be imagined that the artist could see very little of him, except in a general way; and yet for an instant or two, as the rays of the suspended lamp swept across the face, its features were distinctly revealed. Peterfield was almost fascinated by that brief glimpse, for the face was one of so distinct a type that it could not be forgotten. The features seemed to be chiselled with the delicacy of some rare carving in marble. The mouth was hidden by a moustache that curled over it, the eyes glowed as if they were points of highly-polished ebony, and the whole face appeared to wear a sardonic expression. The man was intensely dark, as it seemed to Peterfield; medium of height, with a slim figure, and a snake-like gracefulness of motion. He wore an Inverness cape, and a dark-coloured slouched hat pushed off the forehead. Such was the hurried mental photograph Peterfield was enabled to take; and, as an artist, he observed in a way that a casual observer would not have done.

In recalling the impression made upon him by this unexpected *rencontre*, he said he felt he had looked upon a remarkable man of a distinctly original type. Once again they were destined to meet. This time it was in the passage of Peterfield's house. He was ascending to the upper storey, and reached the passage just as the drawing-room door opened and the stranger came forth. Owing to the brighter light the artist was enabled to get a better view of the mysterious man, and he noticed that he had a pale olive complexion, that his hair was intensely dark, and his eyes almost unnaturally brilliant.

"He struck me," said Peterfield, "as being a man of lofty intellect—scholar, student, and poet in one. What I mean by that is, he was of the type we associate with great intellectual power. His face and expression were certainly those of a thinker—a philosopher mayhap—at any rate of a man who could not be ranked as commonplace, and one who was not likely to find pleasure in the ordinary pursuits of ordinary men. And something in his expression indicated to my mind very clearly that he was a confirmed cynic."

Mrs. Felstead had followed him into the passage, but they both drew back when they noticed Peterfield, who, however, got something more than a mere glimpse of the man, and came to the conclusion that he was, in a word, "a singular being." He and the lady apparently were well matched, and probably each found in the other's society that enjoyment which nothing else and nobody else in the world could give them.

At that time all this, of course, was mere inference, the result of rapid deduction from such signs as were presented to the artistic eye of one used to generalizing quickly, and it is set forth as interesting, inasmuch as it serves to show that Mrs. Felstead's visitor was not likely to be overlooked even in a crowd.

The following morning she remarked to her landlord, "You saw my visitor last night?"

"Yes," was the answer. "But it was a mere chance."

"And yet he was greatly annoyed."

"Indeed," exclaimed Peterfield, not without a feeling of alarm lest the little incident, trifling as it was, might be the means of interrupting the harmony that had so long existed between him and his lodger.

"He is very, very peculiar," continued Mrs. Felstead with a seriousness of tone that was unusual with her. "He has a perfectly morbid dread of making acquaintances, and so nervously sensitive is he that he cannot bear to be even looked at by strangers, hence the reason that he never goes out except at night. Of course I can understand that all this will seem very strange to you. You may even think it is ridiculous; but then we are not all constituted alike, and I thank goodness for it. Most people are so very commonplace that they disgust one with their monotonous sameness."

Mr. Peterfield hastened to assure his lodger that he would endeavour for the future to avoid coming in contact with the man of mystery, whereupon the lady relaxed the sternness of her features, and smiling sweetly as was her wont, she said:

"Ah, it is a pity that he is so strange, so eccentric. You would like him, for you have tastes in common. He loves the picturesque, the artistic side of life, and he has a creative fancy that is only given to genius."

She had never before gone even so far as this, meagre as it was, in speaking of him, and it tempted Peterfield to respond to a strong impulse, and put this question:

"I should like to ask you, Mrs. Felstead, if that gentleman is your husband?"

The question drove the smile from her face, and she drew herself up in a haughty, proud, disdainful way, while her soft eyes flashed with the light of anger.

"Husband," she echoed with a sneer. "He is greater than a husband. He is my lord, my king, my ideal." Then she swept into her room and closed the door with a violence that too plainly indicated the ruffled state of her feelings.

Mr. Peterfield would scarcely have been human if he had not experienced some concern, for selfishness in a greater or lesser degree is absolutely inseparable from human nature. To his beautiful, if strange, lodger, he owed the success that had come to him, and he experienced something like a superstitious dread that if she went away his good luck would depart too. So there and then he made a resolve that he would use every endeavour to undo the mischief he seemed to have done, and to salve over the wounded feelings of the hypersensitive lady. But he knew that it would not do to force the opportunity for this. He must bide his time until chance favoured him. He told his wife what had happened, and she agreed with him that it was advisable to try and pacify Mrs. Felstead if she really was offended, but she took the womanly view of the case, and said lightly:

"But, there, don't let it concern you. It's a mere bit of feminine stupidity. She'll repent it in a very short time. Some women are so touchy when a man is in question. I think you had better leave the matter to me. I've no doubt I shall be able to put it all right."

To this the husband assented, and a couple of days later Mrs. Peterfield told him that all was well. She had spoken to the lodger, and that lady had laughed in her usual genial way, saying she was annoyed by the question at the time, but she had since forgotten all about it.

About a week after this, Mrs. Felstead went to Peterfield's studio, which was at the top of the house, and said to him:

"I have a strange fancy, Mr. Peterfield. Some years ago I was in Florence, and in one of the galleries there I saw a picture that has haunted me

ever since. I forget who the artist was, but this was the subject: A radiantly-beautiful woman, who had died young, was arrayed as if for a wedding. She was lying on a couch of flowers, her head resting on a silken cushion, while her magnificent hair was unbound, and framed her face, as it were, in a mass of old gold. And oh! that face—how sweet, how angelic it was! A smile rested there. The cheeks were tinged with a faint flush, like that which the setting sun lends to the lily. There was no sign of pain or sorrow there, but an expression of perfect joy, of unalloyed bliss. She was dressed in a loose, flowing robe of white crape trimmed with gold, and fastened by a gold zone at the waist. Her delicate hands were crossed on her bosom, and held a bunch of gardenias and maiden-hair. The title given to the picture was 'The Bridal Couch of Death.' It was one of the most exquisite things I have ever seen. Now, I want you to paint a similar picture. I will be the model. And the subject is so full of poetical fancy that your artistic genius should revel in it."

Strange as the request was, Mr. Peterfield did not attach any importance to it, as coming from so eccentric a lady, and he undertook the commission. All the details of dress and pose as she had described them she carried out, and he produced a picture worthy of so beautiful a subject, so fantastic a theme. She declared it was "ravishing and divine," and she had it placed on an easel in her room. A few days afterwards she said she was going to send the picture away, and a man would come for it that evening. The man duly came, but nobody saw him save Mrs. Felstead, and the wonderful picture disappeared.

A week elapsed. It was in the month of June, when one morning the housemaid entered Mrs. Felstead's sitting-room to perform some necessary duties. As she

opened the door she was startled to observe the lady lying on the table, which was strewn with flowers. She was attired exactly as in the picture, and her magnificent hair was arranged with studied negligence about the beautiful face and neck. The hands, clasping a bunch of gardenias and maiden-hair, were crossed upon her bosom, and a smile lingered upon the white face, upon which the light through the half-drawn curtains of the window fell.

The girl called the lady by name. There was no answer. She touched the hands, and she touched marble, for Mrs. Felstead was stone dead.

Yes, Mrs. Felstead was stone dead, and beside her on a crimson cushion was Glory, the silken spaniel, dead too. The poetry and the picturesqueness of the affair were soon destroyed by doctor, police, and coroner. The lady was arrayed as if for a bride, and bride she was. Death had wooed and won her. But it was no vulgar form of death that had suddenly overtaken her, for there was no wound, no external signs to indicate how the spirit had been let loose from its earthly tenement. She had not been ill. All the time she had lived with the Peterfields she had never consulted a medical man, never complained of ache or pain, never displayed any symptom of disease. Therefore, her end coming as it had done, so unlooked for, so unanticipated by those who resided with her under the same roof, was startling and significant, and suggested either self-slaughter or murder. Law takes no note of sentiment, while the Muse shivers with fright, and flies at the very name. Law in the abstract embodies justice, sometimes tempered with mercy, but law in principle is hard, stern, unpitying, sordid, and relentless, while those who live by it often make Truth blush and Humanity weep. In Mrs. Felstead's case

the "majesty" of the law had to be vindicated, for no man has a right to take the life of another, and no one is justified in laying violent hands upon himself. Life is God-given, and until God chooses to take back that which He has bestowed, it is a sin to anticipate the end.

Now there was much mystery in Mrs. Felstead's end, inasmuch as she had realized the picture which Peterfield had painted for her, the original of which, according to her account, was in a gallery at Florence. From the very first one of two things seemed absolutely certain—either she had been murdered or she had committed suicide. Whichever it was, death had in her case been made beautiful and poetical, and the highest form of artistic feeling had been displayed. But the world is practical—life is sacred, and so it had to be determined by such means as the minds of men have devised how the lady had come to die so suddenly. It was noted by those who were amongst the first to enter the room that a strange sickly odour pervaded the atmosphere. The medical men recognized this odour, and when they came to prosecute their surgical researches for the hidden cause of death they were enabled to determine that the cause was chloroform. Both the lady and the dog had died by the same means. Then the law in solemn voice demanded to know whether the lady had administered the deadly essence to herself, or whether it had been administered by some other hand. In the one case it would be suicide; in the other murder. On me devolved the task of using every endeavour to answer the stern question of the law.

Detail by detail I learnt the story of the lady as I have given it, from the moment when she first called about the apartments down to the hour of her

mysterious death. Mr. Peterfield was an intelligent man; a man of observation, and one who knew the value of *immuticæ*. And in her own way his wife was no less intelligent. Necessarily they were both greatly distressed by their lodger's death. They had become very fond of her; and they could not fail to be very painfully conscious that in her they had lost a friend; a friend who had brought sunshine into their home, who had changed despair into hope, poverty into prosperity. From the very first not the faintest shadow of suspicion rested on them. In the fable, the owner of the goose that laid the golden eggs slew her in order to determine the cause of the extraordinary supply of wealth. But in the Peterfields' case no such fantastic curiosity existed.

My investigations soon led me to the conclusion that Mrs. Felstead had been murdered; and her murderer was the mysterious stranger whom she had spoken of as being her lord, her king. It was known that he was in the house on the night preceding her death. He was heard to come about eight o'clock; but at what hour he had departed no one could say. It must have been pretty late; perhaps not long before the servant entered and found the poor lady arrayed on the bridal couch of death. It was no ordinary crime; it was not a crime in which lucre or revenge had been the motive. The woman, I was sure, had been killed for the sake of a sentiment, and he who killed her was a madman. The more I went into the story the more surely did my inferences and deductions crystallize that view of the case in my mind.

The motive, therefore, was—a sentiment.

The sentiment was—an outcome of madness.

These two features of the strange case I steadily kept in view in my endeavours to unravel the mystery,

for I think it will be admitted that there was a good deal of mystery surrounding the whole affair. Nor did I lose sight for a moment of the importance of the picture painted by Peterfield, and which had been removed from the house. That picture was a link in the tragedy, and there was some strange connection between it and the lady's death; therefore the link would have to be found. Of course a search was made, and a very diligent search, too, by the police for chloroform in Mrs. Felstead's apartments. No vestige or sign of it, however, was forthcoming. Yes, stay, a sign was there. On the floor of the room in which her dead body was lying was picked up a large white silk handkerchief, which had unmistakably been saturated with chloroform, although it was quite dry when found. But there were all the indications of it having been wet, and when found it still retained a faint odour of the subtle fluid which had given Mrs. Felstead her quietus. In one corner of the handkerchief beautifully worked in pale yellow silk were the initials S.H. Need I say that I took possession of that handkerchief, for I felt that it might prove invaluable as a clue? No similar handkerchief was found amongst Mrs. Felstead's effects, therefore the assumption was that it had been used as a means of administering the chloroform, death having been produced by inhalation; and that he who had administered it had left the handkerchief behind by accident not design. It was a singular and remarkable thing that no letters of any kind, nor any memoranda likely to be of use, were discovered amongst the lady's things; and Peterfield remembered that so far as he knew she had never received a letter all the time she had lived at his house, nor had she been known to post one, nor had anyone—save the mysterious stranger—ever visited her. In one of her boxes

were a bank book and several cheque books. The last balancing of her passbook showed that she had several thousand pounds in the bank. Inquiries at the bank brought forth the information that her account was constantly replenished by cheques drawn on a certain Devonshire bank, and always signed by a firm of lawyers in the same town in Devonshire as that in which the bank was situated. To them I went, and from them I learnt that many years before they had been appointed trustees under the will of a very eccentric lady named Stelfer. It was known, or at any rate it was believed that she was the widow of a West India merchant. It was beyond doubt that she had come from the West Indies, and invested her money in property in the town in question, and in doing this she displayed a very shrewd business aptitude. She had one daughter, Sybil by name, and though she had ample means she lived in a mean way. The child was remarkable for beauty. She was said, indeed, to be the prettiest child in the town. Her mother had her educated at home, and she was never allowed to go anywhere unless in the company of her governess or her mother, who seemed afraid of letting her out of her sight. Mrs. Stelfer at length died. Sybil was then barely nineteen. The firm of solicitors was appointed her guardian and trustees; and as she expressed a very strong desire to go to London they placed her under the care of a lady of good social position, who had two daughters much about Sybil's own age.

In a very few months, however, the girl wrote to her guardians saying she hated the people she was with and intended to go away. She described them as "commonplace, sordid, vulgar," and "too much given to psalm-singing" to suit her taste. Of course her guardians were anxious to know what

she wished to do, and where she was going to. Her answer was she was going to travel abroad. They said they would endeavour to procure a suitable companion for her, but she answered that she was quite capable of selecting her own companion; and off she went to the Continent, nor could the guardians stop her, for it was expressly stated in the will that they were not to exercise any irksome control over her, and she was to be allowed a fixed sum of money every month until she was of age, when she was to obtain full possession of the property left to her by her mother. It was known that she passed some time in Florence, thence she went to Rome. During her absence she drew her allowance regularly, and frequently wrote to her guardians, giving them descriptions of places she had seen and people she had met. It was noted, however, that her letters were all written in a vein of strong cynicism. She spoke of the world as being beautiful; but men and women, she said, were slimy reptiles, who left the blight of their curse on all the beauty that God had given. For a young woman to have held such views showed that she must have been peculiarly constituted.

When Miss Stelfer reached her majority she returned home to arrange her business affairs with her lawyers and guardians, and take possession of her property. It was remarked that her business aptitude was quite equal to her mother's, and the opinion was she was fully equal to looking after herself and her property. She appointed the solicitors her agents, instructing them to manage the same and regularly remit the proceeds to her. Amongst the property she owned was the valuable freehold of a flourishing brewery, so that altogether her income was a substantial one. Having settled her

business to her own satisfaction she departed for London, and from that time her solicitors were unable to learn anything of her movements.

Down to this point we had learnt her history from her early girlhood, and it was conclusively established that she had first drawn the breath of life in the island of Trinidad. But from that point onward to the time when she was found lying on "the bridal couch of death" there was much yet to be learnt in order to clear up the mystery.

Continuing my investigations, I found that she had assumed the name of Felstead on going to live at Kennington, where she occupied costly apartments; was visited in the same secret way by a man; but was far more reserved, far more reticent, with the people she lodged with there than she had been with the Peterfields. There could be no doubt in the mind of any intelligent person that the man who visited her at Kennington was the same one whom she was in the habit of receiving at the Peterfields; and whoever that man was, it was as clear as daylight that he had acquired an extraordinary influence over her; and yet there was not a jot of evidence to substantiate the suspicion that was entertained that the influence had been exerted for sordid motives. I was convinced he was no ordinary man, nor was she an ordinary woman, and they had come together by a law of affinity, and had been moved and actuated by a common idea, a common sentiment. Apparently they were not in touch with the world generally, and found in each other an ideal, which in part or wholly satisfied them. That was my theory, and on that theory I worked.

I did not for a moment suppose that the name she had assumed—Felstead—was a legitimate one. Much as she might have hated society generally, and

Mrs. Grundy in particular, she found it expedient, at least to conform to some extent to those conventional laws by which society is governed. I therefore did not seek for her slayer under the name of Felstead, but for S.H., the initials on the handkerchief. This handkerchief was altogether an uncommon one. It was of the very finest silk, with a narrow border running all round it of pale yellow silk, and the initials had been worked in yellow to correspond. To this handkerchief I pinned my hopes of tracing the man I wished to find. My plan, therefore, was to advertise for the owner of the handkerchief in all the London papers. Let it not be supposed that I expected for a moment the owner himself would apply. But it was difficult to imagine him being entirely without some connections. He must have had somebody, for instance, to wash his linen, and should the advertisement fall under the eye of the somebody results might follow. There was a certain artfulness in the wording of the advertisement, and the inference sought to be conveyed was that the handkerchief had been found in the street, and the owner could have it by paying the cost of the advertisement.

The result I had hoped for came within a few days. A fictitious name was given, and an address in the city, and to this address was delivered one morning a letter couched in the following terms:—

SIR,—I have seen your advertisement, and think the handkerchief must belong to my master. All his handkerchiefs are like that, and he is always losing something. If you will bring it here I will pay for your trouble, and any expense there may be.—Yours truly,

HELEN PRESTON.

To the address given, a quiet but aristocratic locality in the south-western district of London, I

made my way. The house, a large, square, massive-fronted, semi-detached building, had a substantiality and finish about it which suggested that it had been erected at a period ante to the advent of the modern jerry builder. There was a considerable space of garden in front, but it was choked up with weeds and rank grass, and three or four tall poplar trees threw a shadow of gloom over the place. On the massive stone pillar supporting the iron gate that gave entrance to the garden was carved in deep letters "Astral House." The pathway was overgrown with grass, and the steps leading to the main door were green and slimy.

Ringing the bell, I was soon face to face with a middle-aged, stoutish woman, whose florid appearance did not give one the idea that she mortified the flesh for the sake of the soul.

"Is your name Helen Preston?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered, and then, divining my errand, inquired if I had come about the handkerchief. I told her that I had, and without hesitation she invited me to enter. The hall was large and well furnished, and heavy and handsome curtains concealed the stairs at the end. Complying with her request, I walked into an anteroom, which was also well furnished and exceedingly comfortable. A man considerably older than the woman, and having grey hair and beard, was seated by the fire, but rose as I entered, and Mrs. Preston presented him as her husband. He greeted me cheerily, and remarked that he supposed I had picked up the handkerchief somewhere. I told him it had been found, but I did not say where, whereupon the woman exclaimed:

"Master is, I think, the most careless man in the world. He is always losing his things."

"What is your master's name?" I asked casually.

"Hengald, sir," she answered frankly.

"And his Christian name?"

"Stephen."

"Of course you will be able to recognize the handkerchief?" said I.

"Oh, yes; there is not a doubt about it."

I thereupon produced the handkerchief, and the woman and her husband both declared it was one of a number which their master owned, and from a drawer Mrs. Preston produced a pile of them, identical in every way with the one in my possession.

"Is the master in?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Can I see him?"

"Lor' bless you, no," cried the woman with a laugh. "Why, he never sees anyone, excepting us. He's the queerest mortal that ever I've known. I'm the only one that's ever allowed to go into his room upstairs."

"Is he quite right in the head?" I asked.

"Well, sir," she replied with some hesitation, "between you and me, I don't believe he is. He's a bit queer; though I oughtn't to say it."

"Do you know much about him?"

"Well, the fact is, we've been with him for ten years, but he's never told us anything, and we don't know anything, only that this place and the next house belong to him."

"Who lives in the next house?"

"No one. He won't let it. He wasn't so bad when we first came. He went out more, and sometimes saw us, but he has gradually been getting more gloomy and silent."

It was plain to see that these people were not in their master's secrets. They seemed honest and straightforward enough folk, and therefore I felt it

was better to go straight to the point, so I said to the woman :

"Now, Mrs. Preston, my business here is far more serious than that of merely bringing back this handkerchief. The fact is, there is every reason to believe that Stephen Hengald has been guilty of a great crime."

"A crime!" echoed the couple in one voice, while their faces paled, and they looked at each other with a startled and inquiring expression. Then the woman remarked with a sort of a groan : "Well, upon my word, I am not surprised."

"You will understand now," I continued, "that it is necessary for me to see him."

She appeared to be greatly perplexed and troubled, and looked to her husband as if for guidance, and he, having reflected for some moments, said to her :

"Nell, it ain't for us to screen the master if he's been up to anything wrong. We've always done our duty by him, and we've had a good place, but we mustn't screen him if he's broke the law. So you had better take the gent up."

With obvious reluctance the wife yielded to her husband, and, indicating that I was to follow her, she led the way along the passage, and, passing under the heavy curtains already referred to, I found myself mounting a broad flight of stairs, carpeted so thickly and luxuriantly that not a sound arose, not a footfall was heard. I found myself on a noble landing, carpeted no less luxuriously, while the walls were draped with rich purple velvet and a few costly statuettes—mostly of females—stood out in bold relief against the dark background. A stained glass window lighted the landing by day, and a multi-coloured lamp by night. Proceeding to the end of the landing, the woman drew aside a heavy

curtain and opened a felt-lined door. She made a motion for me to remain where I was, but I went forward, and my sense of smell was assailed by a faint odour of what I took to be incense. I found myself in a room hung with velvet, as the landing was. Here were statues again and exquisite paintings, principally of flowers and fruit. From the ceiling a noble coloured lamp was suspended, and, being lighted, it diffused a soft glow throughout the apartment. A looped curtain at a door-way at the end of the room allowed me to catch a glimpse of a room beyond, and I almost fancied I was gazing on some scene of enchantment. It was a long and lofty room lighted with coloured lamps. The walls were entirely hidden with the most costly velvet, relieved by paintings, statues, vases of flowers. The floor was covered with the most magnificent of carpets, and spread about were priceless rugs. Brocaded ottomans, stools, lounges, were everywhere, some of them upholstered in material of brilliant colours, until the eyes were dazzled and the other senses lulled by a sensuous languor, for the air was heavy with perfume, and the whole place might have been a bower of some Oriental princess. But stranger than all was the presiding genius of this remarkable scene, for on a low couch covered with a splendid fur rug and clad in a robe of gold brocade reclined a man. He had evidently been reading, but appeared to be half asleep, and the book had fallen from his hand to the floor. Near him was an exquisitely-wrought filigree metal stand holding an Egyptian boat-shaped lamp, the soft light from which brought his pale, delicately-carved face into startling relief. It was a face that once seen could hardly be forgotten. It was a face cast in the very finest of patrician moulds, but it was utterly without colour

or warmth, and the dark, flowing hair over the lofty brow and the dark, drooping moustache enhanced the death-like pallor. As I gazed on this strange man, sunk as he was in a dreamy, languorous listlessness, I saw a startling sight. From the folds of his splendid robe issued the head of a wondrously-coloured snake—a South American carpet snake, as it subsequently proved to be. Gradually it withdrew its glittering body from the warmth of its resting-place, and then placed its jewel-like head on the cheek of the man, who thereby disturbed moved his hand, and gently grasping the reptile said:

“Achiroe, you are rude. Keep quiet; you disturb my slumbers.”

His voice was soft, flute-like, and mellow. There was a perfect fascination in it. Opening his eyes, as he spoke, eyes that had a strange, far away, dreamy expression in them, he beheld me standing there. Mrs. Preston, fearing the consequences of our intrusion, had withdrawn. He partly raised himself from his reclining position, and said, addressing me:

“Who are you that you come here unbidden?”

He showed no anger. He seemed in no way disturbed. He spoke in tones that were quite without any trace of agitation.

“Stephen Hengald, I have some serious business with you,” I answered. “I request that you will rise.”

“To-morrow, to-morrow,” he murmured drowsily, as with a gentle movement he put the snake back into the folds of his robe, and sinking down upon his luxurious couch closed his eyes, and showed an utter indifference to my presence.

I felt the awkwardness of the position. How was I to act in such unusual circumstances? This was no ordinary man, and he seemed to be under the

influence of some drug. Therefore I deemed it advisable to take advice as to the course to pursue, for he was not a vulgar ruffian, a desperate murderer who had to be subdued with force.

As I stood thus debating in my own mind, I glanced towards a recess, which was in the direct line of vision of anyone reclining where Hengald was, partly screened by a loose curtain, but from the recess issued a rosy light. I moved to the recess, and, drawing back the curtain, beheld the picture which Peterfield had painted for Mrs. Felstead—"The Bridal Couch of Death." It rested on an easel, and from each side of the recess a rose-coloured light streamed full upon it, bringing out all its details, and softening and beautifying the whole in a marvellous manner. I noted then that from where Hengald lay he commanded a full view of the painting. I looked at him, but his eyes were still closed, and he appeared to be sleeping.

Silently I retired. The rich pile carpets prevented any sound. Mrs. Preston was waiting for me on the landing, and anxiously inquired what had taken place. When I told her she said:

"Ah, I suppose he has been dosing himself again. He takes something to make him dream, as he says, but I am sure it's killing him. He gets weaker and weaker and more and more pale. I often expect when I go into his room to find him dead.

In about two hours I returned to Hengald's house, accompanied by the chief superintendent of a Metropolitan division of police and two of his officers. As may be supposed Mrs. Preston and her husband were much distressed and alarmed, though the worst they had to fear was the loss of what to them was no doubt a perfectly unique home. We proceeded

upstairs to the splendidly-furnished apartments. The couch was vacant, the room empty so far as Hengald was concerned; but on the couch, coiled up in the deep fur of the splendid rug, was the gorgeously-coloured snake which, as we gathered from Mrs. Preston, had for a long time been Hengald's sole companion, and he had bestowed upon it the classical name of Achiroe.

At right angles with this room was the "Dreamer's" sleeping apartment, the doorway, as all doorways in the house were, being concealed by a heavy velvet curtain. In this instance, at the bottom of the curtain was more than a foot of gold bullion fringe. Pulling the curtain aside we passed into the bedroom. Here again the most lavish expenditure had been indulged in. Splendid carpets, costly rugs, velvet hangings, brocaded furniture, cheval glasses, bronzes, statuettes, water-colour drawings, ravished the senses with a scene of richness and sensuous comfort not often met with. The ceiling of this superb apartment was in itself a priceless work of art. The mouldings were coloured with cream and gold, and on the plane was a magnificent painting representing an allegorical subject—"The Awakening of Aurora at the Kiss of the God of Day." The heavy canopied bed was covered with a black silk, gold embroidered counterpane, and lying in an easy and graceful position on this, his marble-like face with its delicately cut features being brought into startling relief by the black silk, was Hengald asleep, but we soon found that it was the sleep which dreams perplex not. He was dead, and the method of his death was soon made apparent. On a small ormolu-topped table by the bedside was a phial still half full of morphia while a hypodermic syringe, and a tiny puncture in the dead man's arm told silently but eloquently

their own tale. What had prompted him to take his own life can only be conjectured; but it is highly probable that my unexpected intrusion when he lay upon his couch with his pet, Achiroe, had warned him that his dream was over, and calmly, and maybe without a pang of regret, he put an end to his existence.

A mass of papers and diaries were found amongst his possessions, and from these was gathered the story of his life. He came of a noble Swedish family who had been forced to fly from their country for political reasons. His parents were evidently people of the most æsthetic tastes, tastes that were inherited by their children, of whom there were two, Stephen and a girl, who was said to be ravishingly beautiful. The sister and brother idolized each other, and they studied and dreamed together until the youth was nineteen and the girl sixteen, when she died suddenly. From that hour the young man seemed to have shut himself off from the world in the common sense, and he created a world, so to speak, of his own. He became an intense lover of books, especially poetry and philosophy; he surrounded himself with the very choicest works of art, and led a lonely and reflective life. Both his parents died while he was still young, leaving him a most ample fortune, so that he had the means of gratifying his peculiar tastes to the fullest extent. After the death of his mother and father Stephen travelled for some time, and appears to have covered nearly the whole of Europe. He had a habit of daily recording his impressions, his thoughts, and his experiences, and a few extracts from his diaries will best tell the sequel of what I have recorded so far. He was sojourning in Madrid when he wrote the following passages.

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"It is a disgustingly vulgar world, made so by man himself, who is the most vulgar of God's creations. I have been accused of being a dreamer because I hate the grovelling, sordid, mean, huckstering, lying spirit which characterizes my fellow-beings. And how I shudder at and loathe the hypocrisy which tries to cheat heaven itself! How I hate the hollowness of women, the knavery of men! For years I have diligently searched for the philosopher's stone, which is Truth, but I have come to the conclusion that it does not exist anywhere in the world. It may be found in Paradise, carefully guarded by the angels who carried it off from earth because men despised it. Often do I seriously think of seeking out some lonely spot in the world which is as yet untainted with the hateful presence of man."

"I have arrived in Florence—Florence the beautiful and the cradle of art. But here as everywhere lies the slimy trail of the serpent in the presence of man. Greed, and the selfishness begotten of greed; the cruelty of avarice; the falseness and hypocrisy of pretention. Can I not get away from all these things? I grow sick and faint as I watch the pitiable game of life. The painted jade with her smirks and smiles cozening the lustful man, the knaving trader, the lying lawyer, the false priest, the pitiless landlord, the robber of the widow and orphans, the unjust magistrate, the stupid statesman; and this is life. Oh, the pity of it; the pity of it!"

"To-day while wandering in one of the galleries my attention was drawn to a remarkable picture. It was labelled "The Bridal Couch of Death." The subject had been treated well. It was full of poetry and feeling. I liked the idea. It suited my mood.

Better far for an unworldly woman to be wedded to death than to man. For in man's heart sits a devil, while death at least releases us from all that is hateful here. As I studied this masterpiece of artistic imagination, I turned by chance, and lo! beside me stood a woman, the model, as it seemed to me, of the painting. She was beautiful, with a face so sweet, so full of gentleness, that to me it was unique. I addressed her, inquiring if she was the model of the figure in the picture. She told me she was not. It was certainly a coincidence. The face of the dead woman was the face of the living one."

"In the lady to whom I spoke yesterday I have found a spirit of purity and sweetness that enchants me. She is unlike all other women I have ever known, save my sainted sister. In truth Sybil is like my sister in many respects. To me it seems as if my sister lives in her again. I must know her better. She is worth knowing. Like me she hates the world of men. Like me she is searching for truth."

"It is weeks ago now since I first met Sybil Stelfer, and the opinion I formed then has in no way changed. She has an original mind. She has formed an ideal of a world and she aims at living in it. This woman, unlike all other women, save my sister, gives me pleasure. I love to hear her talk. Her voice is music. She is an incarnate poem. We have much in common. I am coming to love her, but not with a carnal love."

I will skip many passages in his diary, which, though full of philosophical reflection and marked by grace of diction no less than highly poetic imaginings, would occupy far more space than I have at

my disposal. Suffice to say that he and Sybil wandered for some time about the Continent, dreaming their dreams and living an ideal life. There is not a line nor a word to suggest that their friendship was anything more than the purest of platonism. They visited some of the most beautiful spots; and he frequently refers to Sybil as being "a perfect woman" and twice or thrice he speaks of her as being "a ravishing dream of all that is noble and beautiful in feminine nature." At last they returned to London, and he thus writes:—

"Between me and Sybil has been formed an unbreakable link based upon the very highest conception of earthly love. We are sister and brother, and she gives to me a love as holy as that my divine sister gave to me and I to her. For me she has made the world brighter, better, purer, and I know now what it is to live. In order that the incarnate hypocrisy of prurient minds may not sully the sweet spirit of my spiritual wife, I have urged her to make a concession to the community in which circumstances force us to live, and henceforth she will be known as Mrs. Felstead. It is sad to think that one must be a living lie, for I have sought for truth, yet now I outrage truth. But it is for my darling's sake. For you unholy preachers of righteous things; you hirelings of the press who sell your souls for gold; you besmirchers of fair fames; you asptongued scandal-mongers; you revoltingly hypocritical Mrs. Grundys; you lying and slandering men and women whose hearts are rotten and whose souls are damned—on you must fall the responsibility for the falsehood under which we are compelled to exist.

For part we will not, and be aught else than sister and brother we cannot."

"To me the past two years have been Elysium. Those delicious dreamy hours I have spent with my beloved can have no counterpart in Paradise. And yet of late a shadow has clouded our happiness. I am mortal, and a mortal disease is slowly but surely slaying me. Long and earnestly we have discussed the matter, and my soul's soul has vowed that she cannot live after me, and yet she shudders at the thought of laying hands upon herself, therefore we have decided that when it is unmistakable that my end is near she will die by my hand. The world will call this a crime; but what care we for the world. We claim the right to destroy that which is in our own keeping."

"By my request my darling has posed as the model for a picture similar to the one we saw in the gallery at Florence years ago. The painter has done his work well; and when the time comes Sybil will actually realize that picture, and when her sweet body has been consigned to the mould, my remaining days will be cheered by the picture of her as I last beheld her. There shall be no vulgarness in our dying. As we have endeavoured to live poetic lives so we will endeavour to die poetic deaths."

"It is accomplished. My beloved is cold and beautiful as virgin marble. She has died unsullied, untouched, uncantered by a single sensual act or deed. She awaits for me now in a world of light, where

Truth blazes with dazzling effulgence. Farewell all that is base, mean, and squalid. Never again will I cross the threshold of my door. When once that door closes upon me, it will be as the door of a tomb."

"I die slowly. When I saw my heart's idol lying so still among the flowers I thought that a day or two at the most would be all that would intervene before I joined her, for I was frail and fragile, and the pulse of life was scarcely perceptible. Hasten your coming, tardy Death, or I shall hasten to meet you."

"A strange languor steals upon me. I see but dimly. I am irritable, even my pet Achiroe disturbs me. Through the vast and silent spaces that lie between me and the unknown comes the bell-like voice of my well-beloved calling me, calling, ever calling; and I see her form, radiant in robes of gold, and her face lighted with a light of joy such as the world could never give. To-night, to-night, dear one, Death shall wed us."

This was the last passage he ever wrote. It is not necessary to add any description of the practical details the law demanded. But one verdict could be returned. The strangely-constituted man had, with her consent, taken the life of the equally strangely-constituted woman. Nor for gain, revenge, spite, or jealousy; but for love's sake. Nevertheless, the world calls it murder. That he could not have lived many weeks in the ordinary course of nature was proved by the *post-mortem* examination, which demonstrated that he had an absolutely incurable disease; but he anticipated his end, and the law said

he had slain himself while temporarily insane. Perhaps the world will say that he never had been sane, but all men are not mad who choose to walk differently to their fellows.

By the deaths of this strange couple the Peterfields were large gainers, for they both left their fortunes to them. It is satisfactory also to know that Hengald amply provided for the wants of his old and faithful retainers.

It is interesting to state that the snake Achiroe—why he should have called it after a daughter of the Nile is not clear—whose compeer for beauty had never before been seen in this country, pined so for her lost master that she died in a few weeks.

THE CRIME OF THE LONELY MARSHES.

A STRANGE PARALLEL TO THE ARDLAMONT CASE.

How true it is that history repeats itself; and equally true that there is nothing new under the sun, whether it be in crime or anything else. What is known as the "Ardlamont Mystery," which for many weeks has been exercising the mind of the public in all parts of the kingdom, bears such a remarkable resemblance in many points to a case that occurred years ago in Austria, or, more strictly speaking, Hungary, that I propose to tell the story of this case in detail as I had it from the lips of the late Karl Radnosky, who spent the greater part of his manhood's life in the Austrian secret service. Radnosky came over to this country in search of one of the chief actors in the strange drama, as it was supposed he had taken up his residence in Scotland, where, ultimately, he was found. The facts of the case are so well known in legal circles that it would be a waste of time for me to urge their truthfulness by comment or explanation. But this I may say, had the story been the outcome of some fiction writer's fancy, he would have been stormed at by the pure-minded critics as "a sensational writer," as though sensationalism wasn't one of the

strongest elements and features of human existence.

As you journey in the steamer along the Danube from Pesth to Rustchuk, in Bulgaria, the river flows for a long way through singularly flat and marshy country, which seems to be inhabited only by the lonely bittern and mournful heron. These marshes extend for miles and miles inland, and are really the haunts of myriads of water-fowl, while the broad rivers that flow through and feed the swamps teem with splendid fish of various kinds. Here and there are small isolated villages, whose inhabitants make their living by sending the fish and fowls to the Austrian and other markets.

The stranger might be apt to suppose that this enormous stretch of water-logged country was no man's land, but therein he would be wrong. There are several proprietors who derive a good income from the shooting and fishing. In parts where the land rises a little above the surrounding dead level, and consequently is drained, it is covered with stunted forest, where fur animals have their haunts, while at intervals on the banks of the great river one comes across little colonies of poor people who catch and prepare the magnificent sturgeon, which they split open, dry, salt, and smoke, and despatch to market, an immense quantity of it finding its way to London. These people live in tent-shaped huts built of reeds, and to the foreigner the huts have a remarkable and picturesque appearance.

About 1840 there was living in this lonely marsh land a wealthy widow lady named Herzog, whose family for generations had owned property extending for hundreds of miles amongst the swamp-lands and the dark forests near Buda-Pesth. On one of the rising patches of ground to which I have referred, the lady, who was said to be eccentric and strange

in her habits, had built a really fine house, which was situated almost in the centre of the oasis of forest. She also owned another house in Buda-Pesth; but that was generally shut up as she preferred to make her home in the lonely marsh land. Let it not be supposed that she mortified herself or lived an ascetic life. On the contrary, she was fond of good living, and her house, especially in the summer—when it was pleasant enough—was often the scene of many pleasant reunions when friends from Buda-Pesth visited her. Of course in the winter the whole country round about was desolation itself; for then fierce gales and howling snowstorms swept the marshes, and woe betide the traveller who was unfortunate enough to get benighted at such a time. It was almost certain his life would be sacrificed. But winter and summer, with the exception of short, occasional absences, the Lady Herzog resided in her isolated dwelling, averring that she preferred it infinitely to any other spot on the globe. What is more singular perhaps is this, there dwelt with her a niece; a young girl of about eighteen or nineteen, who was known as Theresa, and who was renowned for her beauty. If reports are true she was one of the most beautiful girls to be found in the whole of Hungary and Austria. It certainly did seem remarkable that a young and charming girl of this description should have been content to live in such an out-of-the-world place. But soon it began to be rumoured that not only was her aunt excessively kind and indulgent to her, but the young lady was engaged to be married to her cousin, her aunt's only living nephew, and the heir to all her property. This was the young Count Zanzky, who it was understood was travelling through Europe, and for some little time had been residing in England.

Amongst the Lady Herzog's visitors was a certain Colonel Ferraris, who had fought in the Austrian army, and while being recognized as a gallant soldier his private character was not such as would have borne investigation with credit to himself. However, the wealthy widow by no means discarded him, and it was even hinted there was an attachment between them. The Colonel had a servant, or rather a superior sort of valet, in his employ, who also combined to some extent the duties of secretary, for he was a well-educated young man, and had been heard to say that he came from a very good family, who, through political and other causes, had been reduced to poverty, so that the various members of it had to turn out into the world to earn their living. This young man was known as Maurice Farnese, and he had the advantage of being good looking, well formed, and refined and graceful in his manner.

During the numerous visits he made to the lonely house in the marsh land, in company with his employer, he had frequent opportunities of seeing and being in company with the beautiful girl Theresa—in fact, the Colonel used to plan, apparently, to bring them together, and by a good deal of finessing he afforded them the opportunity of going out alone to fish and shoot in the swamps, for Theresa could fish and shoot as well as a man. As might have been expected, the young people fell in love with each other, though Maurice was impressed with the idea that his case was hopeless, for once when the Colonel accused him of looking sad and melancholy, and asked him if he was in love, he confessed that he was. But he said that knowing how useless it was for him to aspire to win the hand of the beautiful Theresa, who, as it was reported, was betrothed to her cousin, he had

resolved to go away, and endeavour to forget her.

At this the Colonel laughed, and replied :

"Don't make a goose of yourself, man. Love recognizes neither rank nor station. You may, for aught we know, be as good a man as the Count; therefore, never despair. Besides I will help you in your suit, and try and bring about a marriage between you and Theresa, if you are faithful and staunch to me."

Of course Maurice was delighted when he heard this, and he vowed that he would be loyal and true to the Colonel till death.

Soon after this the Lady Herzog began to exhibit symptoms of a strange malady, which puzzled the medical men who were called to attend her. And though at first they did not attach any serious import to the illness, they thought it strange, and recommended the lady to go away for a time. This she consented to do, and taking her niece with her, and accepting the companionship of the Colonel, who was, of course, attended by the faithful Maurice, she voyaged to Rustchuk, and after a brief stay there continued the journey to Constantinople. But strangely enough her health did not improve, and a doctor, who was called to see her in the Turkish capital, was as much puzzled as her own doctors were at home. As she began now to think that she wouldn't get better, she determined to return, and she travelled back by slow stages to her lonely residence in the swamps. As soon as she arrived she sent an urgent message to her nephew to go to her with all speed. And he, obeying the summons, travelled night and day, but when he reached his aunt's house she was decidedly better, and expressed regret that she had allowed her fears to interfere with the enjoyment of his tour. To this he answered that he was truly

delighted to be back with her and his beautiful cousin, and as he had had enough of travel for the time being, he intended, with her permission, to stay there and enjoy the company of herself and Theresa. Needless, perhaps, to say, that both the ladies were charmed with the proposal, and the Colonel, who of course had been introduced to the young Count, also expressed his gratification; for, apart from any other consideration, he thought, so he said, that the Count's presence would have a good influence on Madame Herzog's health.

It goes without saying that Maurice Farnese was by no means overjoyed, for he felt that all his hopes of being able to win Theresa were blighted, and he expressed this view one day when he said to the Colonel, his master :

"I have indulged in an impossible dream. I had no business ever to dare to think of Mademoiselle Theresa. I must go away; I must forget her. At least, I will try to forget, but I am afraid it is an impossibility "

The Colonel laughed, and said he was surprised he should be such a coward in love affairs.

"All is fair in love and war," he added. "It is true the ravishing Theresa is engaged to her cousin, but you must endeavour to cut him out. Lay strong siege to the girl's heart, and, then, if it falls not to you, you will have only yourself to blame. For myself, I am going to try and win the widow, and if I can help you count upon my assistance."

The young man was not much comforted, though he altered his mind about going away, and resolved to stay. Count Zanzzy and Colonel Ferraris soon became very warm friends; or at any rate, seemed to be so, and they shot and fished together, and made many excursions up and down the river. On

these occasions the Count expressed a desire that his aunt should be one of the party. But the Colonel managed to dissuade him from asking her, and the young man having quite fallen under his companion's influence, did as the Colonel wished him to do. So the two men went about by themselves, for Maurice Farnese was always left behind, and he improved the occasion by seeking to console pretty Theresa for the absence of her cousin. Matters continued like this for some time, when a strange thing happened that caused consternation and terror in Madame Herzog's household.

One day the Colonel and the Count started off on a fishing expedition on one of the extensive lagoons which abounded in the neighbourhood. Theresa was particularly anxious to accompany them, but the Colonel told her that the day being rough and coarse, and as they were likely to be absent all day, she would suffer and be miserable. He, therefore, advised her to remain at home, and have a warm welcome for them when they returned in the evening. She was not quite pleased at having to remain behind, nevertheless consented to do so, and the two men went off alone, well provided with tackle and provisions. The bag of provisions and other things were carried by one of Madame Herzog's servants, an old man and faithful retainer, who had been brought up in the swamps, and knew every creek, path, and lagoon. When they reached the boat which was lying moored amongst the reeds at the edge of the lake, and the things had been deposited in the bottom of the craft, the Colonel sent old Michael back to the house for some rugs which he said he had forgotten; and which having regard to the rawness of the day would be required. However, getting impatient, the Colonel suggested to his companion that they shouldn't wait

for Michael's return, but start at once, and the Count consenting they pushed off, and rowed for some miles amongst the reeds and sedges until they reached a deep and very lonely creek, where the little anchor of the boat was put out, and the fishing tackle was prepared.

While this was being done the Count noticed with consternation that the boat was filling with water, which appeared to be bubbling up from the bottom.

The Colonel was furious with the boatman from whom the boat had been hired, for not having seen that she was seaworthy; and he suggested they should get up the anchor, and pull to the shore immediately. The Count, who was very much alarmed, for he said that he couldn't swim a stroke, busied himself in getting the wooden anchor in, while the Colonel arranged the oars; but now the water poured into the boat so rapidly that she sank like a stone, and the two men were left struggling in the water.

"God help us! we are lost," cried the Colonel, "for I cannot swim either." In spite of this assertion he struck out, and getting into the shallow part amongst the reeds he waded on shore. The house was several miles off, and the route to it dangerous and treacherous, owing to the swamps and bogs, so the Colonel, dripping and drenched, proceeded to the point where they had embarked, and he found old Michael waiting there with the rugs. The servant was greatly alarmed when he learnt what had happened, and the Colonel appeared to be overwhelmed with grief at the Count's death. Wrapping himself in the rugs, he bade Michael get assistance, and endeavour to recover the Count's body, while he himself would go to the house, and break the news of the calamity to Madame Herzog and Theresa. Having taken a deep drink of some common country

brandy, a flask of which Michael carried in his pocket, he started off on his mournful errand, but after going some distance he seemed to have changed his mind and turned back, notwithstanding that his clothes were soaked with water and he must have been very uncomfortable. He proceeded to the lagoon again. By this time Michael had got from a creek another boat and the assistance of two reed-cutters, the reeds being cut in the autumn for fuel, and he and the reed-cutters pulled with might and main to the scene of the disaster, but instead of bringing back, as they expected they would have to do, the dead body of Count Zanzky they found him alive. He had managed to keep himself afloat by an oar, and had gradually worked his way to the sedges, when he waded to the bank and scrambled out, but was so exhausted that he lay there and gave himself up for lost. But presently, hearing the plash of oars and the voices of men, he got on to his knees and shouted, and by this means was found. He was not robust nor had he a strong physique, and he was in consequence so prostrated that he had to be lifted into the boat. Some brandy was administered to him, and the men wrapped their coats about him. These swamp-dwellers always carry a little flask of the crude native spirit called brandy with them, as they say a little of it taken now and again is a preventative of the ague and marsh fever.

The Colonel on reaching the lagoon saw the boat coming down, and thinking the men had already recovered the Count's body he waited, and when the boat came to the landing-place he saw to his amazement that the Count was living. He was overjoyed, and, falling on the young man's neck, he embraced him again and again, weeping copiously and kissing him with a great show of affection.

The Count was still so weak and ill that he had to be carried to the house, the Colonel preceding the little group in order that he might prepare Madam for the shock, and shocked she was, for she was so weak and ill herself she was not in a condition to bear up against any sudden calamity. When she heard of the accident she swooned, and it was some time before she recovered. Of course, the Count was at once put to bed, and messengers were sent off post haste to the nearest town for medical assistance, as it was feared the young man would have inflammation of the lungs or some other deadly illness. However, although he remained prostrated, or nearly so, for many days, no complications supervened, and he gradually recovered his normal health and strength. But his aunt showed no signs of improvement. On the contrary, she grew worse, and a medical consultation was held, two famous physicians being summoned from Buda-Pesth. After a long conference they came to the conclusion that she was suffering from some form of blood poisoning, though they were at a loss to assign a cause for it. They then proceeded to place her under a course of treatment which they hoped would prove beneficial, and in order that the treatment should be thoroughly carried out and the medicines prescribed regularly administered, a trained nurse named Kovich was brought from Buda-Pesth.

Colonel Ferraris, when he heard that the disease had at last been diagnosed, and that there were prospects of the lady's recovery, expressed the greatest joy, and he became more than ever attentive. So things continued for a little time, but unhappily Madame Herzog's case did not yield to the treatment, and it became only too evident that she was doomed. She herself appeared to be

perfectly conscious of that, for one evening she said to Kovich, the nurse, to whom she had become much attached :

“ Kovich, I shall never get better ; I am convinced of it. But I suppose I must be resigned. I have played my part in life, and, though I should have liked to live a little longer, my destiny is fulfilled. My dear nephew is my sole heir ; he will inherit everything I possess, and as he will marry my niece she is also provided for.”

Theresa was present and heard this conversation, and so was the old housekeeper, a Mrs. Pervintz, and presently the invalid took the hand of her niece, who was sitting at the bedside, and said tenderly :

“ You must not regret my departure, dear. You will be very happy with the Count. He is a good young man, and will, I am sure, make you an excellent husband in every way.”

Theresa made no reply to this, but bowed her head on the bedclothes and wept.

Madame Herzog lingered on for another fortnight, and for a day or two rallied so much that hopes were entertained of her recovery. But one evening when Kovich had retired for a short time to get a little rest, Colonel Ferraris undertook to sit with the invalid, the Count and Theresa having gone for a short stroll by special request of Madame, who said it would do them good, as the weather was fine. Suddenly the Colonel rushed from the sick chamber, and alarming the household, said that he had been reading to the invalid, but as she was disposed to doze, he ceased. Then, owing to the stillness and closeness of the room, he, too, got somewhat drowsy and slept for about twenty minutes, as he asserted. Waking up he looked at Madame, and saw that there

was something peculiar about her face, and touching her he found to his horror that she was dead.

Preparations were at once made to lay the body out, and in removing the bed-things a small box was found under the pillow. On the lid of the box a slip of paper was pasted, and on the paper was written:

"Three days after my funeral this box is to be opened by my notary in the presence of witnesses."

In accordance with these instructions, the box was duly opened by the notary, several other people being present at the time. A will was found in it. It was exceedingly short, and entirely in Madame Herzog's own handwriting, with the exception of the signatures of the witnesses. She stated that, utterly uninfluenced by any living soul, she cancelled the will which she had previously made and placed in the hands of her lawyers at Budapesth, and by this new will she, while still making Count Zanzky her heir, left an immediate legacy to Colonel Ferraris of five thousand pounds, and, in the event of Count Zanzky's death before his marriage with Theresa, everything—estates, property, money—was to go absolutely to the Colonel, with the exception of about one thousand a year, which was to be paid to the niece. This will was signed by Kovich, the nurse, and Maurice Farnese, and, as may be supposed, it caused a good deal of surprise to the lawyers and some of the distant relatives who had hoped to benefit. However, it was all right according to the law of the country, and the notary lost no time in registering it.

About four weeks after the funeral of Madame Herzog, Colonel Ferraris had gone to Buda on business of his own, but, as he had promised to return in a few days, he had not taken his valet, Maurice,

who, as it would seem, still hoped to prevail upon the beautiful Theresa to have him. It seemed, in fact, that the young lady was undecided in her choice, and could not make up her mind which of her charmers she would bestow herself upon. But there is little doubt she led the Count to believe that she was devotedly attached to him, and it is equally certain he was not aware that she showed any preference for Maurice, for, whatever love-making she had done with him had been kept very secret from the Count.

And now another strange and startling circumstance happened. One bright and frosty day Count Zanzzy, accompanied by Maurice Farnese and a number of attendants, went off for a day's shooting, as the frozen lagoons were covered with wild geese, ducks, and other birds.

After a very successful morning the party partook of their luncheon; and, that finished, the Count and Maurice started together for a strip of forest, where they expected to get some fur-bearing animals. Having been absent for an hour or so, Maurice came running back to the attendants, who had prepared a fire and were making coffee, and, with a look of horror on his face, he said that the Count had shot himself, and was then lying dead in the wood. They all went to the wood as fast as their legs would carry them, and there sure enough was the unfortunate young Count, lying on his back half in and half out of a narrow, dry ditch, while the snow about him was stained deeply crimson with the blood that had flowed and was still oozing from a terrible wound in the front part of his head. None of the men touched the body, for, apart from a superstitious fear common to the peasantry of those parts, it was against the law of the country. For a dead body found like

that had to be left in the exact position in which it was found until the legal official whose duty it was to inquire into these matters had seen it. To this official information was at once given, and he rode out as soon as possible with a number of police and gendarmes, also a doctor. The body was lying at the foot of a little embankment that formed the back of the ditch. When shot he must have been standing with his face turned from the ditch into which he fell. The barrel of his gun, which he still grasped in his left hand, was empty. He had been struck full in the forehead by the main part of the charge, and the top of his head was nearly blown off, the brain being exposed. It was noted also that a young fir tree, growing on the top of the embankment, and in direct line with the body, had been much peppered by the shot, some of the twigs being quite broken off. This was regarded as a most suspicious circumstance, and the doctor expressed an opinion that, while it was not altogether impossible that the wounds in the dead man's head were self-inflicted, he did not think they were, unless the Count had deliberately committed suicide. All the other people present were unanimously of opinion that there were a great many suspicious circumstances in connection with the affair, and it seemed to them that the Count could not possibly have shot himself in that manner accidentally. In fact, the feeling was that he had been wilfully and deliberately murdered, and as no one was with him except Maurice Farnese, it was decided that he should be arrested and thrown into prison pending the judicial inquiry, and accordingly this was done.

As may be supposed, this crime of the marshes caused a widespread sensation, for the news flew from lip to lip, and spread like wildfire through Buda-

Pesth, where Madame Herzog and her nephew had been well known. Colonel Ferraris was greatly shocked when he heard of the death of the man whom he referred to as his "best friend," and on Theresa the effect was crushing, for with the Count and with the man accused of his murder she had played fast and loose. Now, one of her lovers was dead and the other in prison. It is very probable that she had had no serious feeling for Maurice, but the flirtation had amused her, and had helped her to pass the time away during the Count's absence. But assuming that she had only flirted with the accused, she could not remain indifferent to the dreadful charge that hung over his head.

Now, from the very first Maurice Farnese protested his innocence. His story was this:—He and the Count had gone to a wood which was known to be the haunt of white hares. On reaching the wood they separated, it being arranged that the Count was to remain concealed in the dry ditch while Maurice acted the part of a beater and drove the game towards the Count. While Farnese was doing this, and while quite out of sight of the Count, he suddenly heard two shots fired in rapid succession. There was nothing alarming in that, as the Count was provided with a double-barrelled gun, but a few seconds later *two other shots were fired*. That was remarkable, and for this reason—the Count's double-barrelled shot-gun was a muzzle loader, and between the firing of the first shots and the second there was not time for the gun to have been reloaded. Who then had fired the second shots? Maurice was so struck that he ran forward, and to his horror he saw the Count lying on the ground and bleeding. Thinking he was only wounded, he knelt down, spoke to him, and touched him, but

to his still greater horror found that he was dead. Then he sped away and raised an alarm. It is hardly necessary to say that this story found no credence, and when it leaked out, as leak out it did, that Maurice and the Count were rivals for the hand of the same lady, the accused was universally condemned before he was tried. It seemed like an insult to the most ordinary intelligence to ask anyone to believe for a moment that Maurice Farnese had not killed his rival the Count Zanzu.

Now law in Austria is neither so expeditious nor so methodical as it is in our own country. There is a vast amount of circumlocution to be gone through, and an accused person is permitted to see his friends and acquaintances with a freedom that would not be tolerated for a single instant here. Then, again, a prisoner can be examined and questioned and cross-questioned by the official charged with the getting up of the case in a manner that may seem to us ridiculous, but which no doubt has much to recommend it. Throughout this trying ordeal Farnese bore himself well; and never once did he vary from his original statement that he heard four shots fired in rapid succession—four shots, representing two double-barrelled guns.

As is usually the case, there was much conflicting testimony about the young man's death. So-called experts were not wanting who roundly declared, that the Count's wounds and the position in which he was lying were quite consistent with the theory that he shot himself accidentally or wilfully. As there seemed to be no earthly reason for his killing himself wilfully, the affair was regarded by these experts as pure accident. But another set of so-called experts were equally emphatic in their declaration that the fatal wounds could not possibly have been self-inflicted.

Then, again, these people asked how the *four* shots were to be accounted for?

Number one set of experts laughed at this question, and said that the second shots existed only in the imagination of the accused man. But number two set stuck to their text, and said that, whether one gun had been fired or two guns mattered not so far as their theory was concerned, and though the Count might have been shot with his own gun, his own hand did not fire it.

"Then you mean he *was* murdered?" shrieked experts number one.

"Undoubtedly we do," answered number two.

"And who murdered him?" asked the other party, losing their heads with excitement.

"Why, the prisoner, of course," answered number two with brutal frankness.

Naturally this difference of opinion led to bitterness and recrimination. Two distinct camps were formed, and the case bid fair to become a *cause célèbre*. Theresa's sympathies seemed to be on the side of the prisoner, for she visited him three or four times, and there was a prevailing opinion that she believed in his innocence. In the meantime, Colonel Ferraris proceeded to the realization of the late Madame Herzog's estate, for under her will he became entitled to everything, with the exception of one thousand a year, which was to be paid to Theresa. The house in the marshes he sold, and sold, too, at what was considered below its value, owing to the haste he displayed in his desire to get rid of it. All her securities, too, were realized, and the Buda-Pesth house was likewise sold. The Colonel was considered a very fortunate man, for it was known the deceased lady had been very wealthy.

During the months that elapsed while these busi-

ness matters were being carried out Maurice Farnese still languished in prison; for, in accordance with the customs of his country, a prisoner can be held in durance vile almost indefinitely until the prosecution think their evidence is sufficiently strong to ensure a conviction. If it does not seem so, then they can wait and wait until they get more evidence. So it was in this case. The prosecution wanted to bar every loophole. It is true that it was generally admitted, and indeed could be proved, that the prisoner looked upon Count Zanzzy in the light of a rival, and that in itself supplied the strongest possible motive for the crime. But in other respects it must have seemed to the prosecution that there were flaws in the indictment, otherwise they would certainly have hurried the affair to an issue.

But now a startling turn was given to the matter by the escape of the prisoner. He had succeeded in getting out of his cell in the prison at Buda-Pesth, where he was confined, and by crossing a courtyard, and using a ladder that had been conveniently left by some workmen, to mount to the top of the wall; he drew the ladder up after him, and then utilized it for descending the other side of the wall with, and he was then a free man. Where he had gone to nobody knew, but it was rumoured that the beautiful Theresa had gone off too, and that she and the accused man had proceeded to Turkey. Whether there was any foundation or not for that rumour was not clear. What was clear beyond all doubt, the prisoner had gone, and Theresa was not found in her accustomed haunts. Therefore, inferentially, she had accompanied him in his flight. The Colonel was appealed to, but he declared he absolutely had not the remotest idea where Theresa had gone to. What he did know was this:—A few days previously she had visited

him, and begged of him to let her have a sum of money, which in English would be between four and five hundred pounds. He questioned her as to what she wished to do with it, and she declined to tell him beyond saying in a general way that she desired to make some purchases. As she was entitled to a thousand a year, he advanced her what she wanted, and that was the last time he saw her.

At this time Karl Radnosky had a private bureau in Buda. For the greater part of his life he had been in the Austrian Secret Service, and he was looked upon as a walking encyclopædia of information of a kind which is seldom contained all in one head. He was one of the best known of public men, and perhaps one of the most reticent and reserved. His secrets were secrets indeed with him, and the human being was not born who could worm them out of him. But if in this he was a walking mystery, he was on the other hand one of the most humane and kindly of men, ever ready to assist those who could not assist themselves, while his remarkable talents as a detective were ever at the service of those who wished to right the wronged, or uphold the cause of justice and order. He was an old man, and had retired on a pension, but as he could not bear to lead an inactive life he had opened a private office, and he had a staff of trained men and women, who were employed to make inquiries in delicate and secret cases, whether of a political or domestic nature.

And to him there came one day soon after Maurice Farnese's flight an interesting and good-looking young woman, who was in deep distress and well-nigh crushed with an overwhelming sorrow. She announced herself as Marguerita Farnese, the sister of Maurice—his only sister. She was governess in a Polish family

living near Warsaw, and she had first heard of her brother's trouble by reading it in a Polish paper. Then she had lost no time in journeying to Buda, but as soon as she arrived she learned that her brother had taken flight. Knowing her brother's gentle nature, and having regard to the many strange rumours she had heard, she could not bring herself to believe that her brother had been guilty of the great crime he was charged with. She thought there were circumstances in the case which ought to be closely inquired into, and she prayed Radnosky in her behalf and her unhappy brother's behalf to take the matter up for her. She was not rich, she added, but she had a little money, and every kreutzer she possessed she vowed should be Radnosky's if he would but serve her.

He listened to her story deeply interested, and he was much moved by her sorrow. So, telling her that he did not want her money, he promised to serve her if he could. He said that all along his own opinion had been that there was a good deal underneath that wanted bringing out, and from the accounts he had read he thought there was a good deal of mystery in connection with Madame Herzog's death. Yet the prosecution, in their eagerness for a conviction, had quite overlooked that feature of the case. So far as Marguerita could be comforted she was comforted, and went her way and waited in suspense for what might be revealed. From the interest Radnosky took in the young woman, he resolved that he would not employ any of his subordinates in the case, but go silently and secretly to work himself. And the first thing he did was to visit the scene of the crime. The young tree which had been growing on the summit of the embankment, and which had been indented with shot, had

been cut down by those who were charged with the defence of the accused man, because they said it afforded conclusive evidence that from the position the Count was in at the time he met his death it would not have been possible for the shot to have struck the tree if he had fired his own gun at himself. Therefore the shot had been fired in a horizontal direction, and from a distance.

Radnosky was allowed to examine the tree, and also the various drawings that had been made as illustrating the supposed position of the Count when the fatal shots were fired, and the known position in which he was in when dead. The theory of Radnosky after that was that the Count had been deliberately murdered, and that the murderer, having accomplished his foul purpose, fired off the Count's gun to lead to the belief that the young man had shot himself. This theory, however, Radnosky did not give away. He kept his thoughts to himself, and he set to work in a most ingenious manner to try and get groundwork for his theory. He began by having a dummy figure the exact height of the Count made, and when this was ready he carried it out to the scene of the crime in the lonely marshes. Then, by actual experiment, he found that a tree behind the figure could not have been struck, having regard to the position of the Count's wounds, if the figure—that is the Count—had fired the gun himself. But at a distance of twenty paces from the ditch was a narrow creek very thickly fringed indeed with tall reeds. Anyone being in a boat on that creek could have pointed a gun at the Count as he stood, and the fringe of reeds would have concealed the boat, the man, and the gun alike. By firing from that position the dummy figure was struck in the head, and a post behind made to do duty for the tree that

had been cut down, was peppered all over with the shot, as the tree had been.

This was an important point determined, and Radnosky proceeded to further investigations. He found that the reed-fringed creek or ditch communicated with a broad and extensive lagoon; and though the creek was very shallow, a flat-bottomed punt, such as was used by the reed cutters and wild fowl shooters, could be easily taken up the ditch. This was another step in advance. The next inquiry was directed to finding out if any of the reed cutters who lived their lonely lives about the shores of the lagoon, had missed a boat on the day of the crime. And at last an old woman was found, who though a victim to ague and crippled with rheumatism, had a perfectly clear intellect, remembered perfectly that on the day the Count was shot her man and her two sons were working at reed cutting two or three miles away. At twelve o'clock she put up their dinner, consisting of soup, bread, and wine, and went to the little landing stage where her punt was usually kept, and with which she intended to convey herself with the dinner to her family, but to her astonishment she found the punt was not there. Thinking that her husband and sons had taken the boat away she resolved that they should go without their dinner. But an hour later one of the sons arrived in hot haste to know why they had been left to starve. Then she learnt that they had not taken the boat. Several days afterwards it was found drifting about on the lagoon.

Radnosky considered he had now gained another point; but still he kept his business to himself, and while he was working at unravelling the mystery the authorities were exerting themselves with might and main to capture the escaped prisoner, but without

avail. They could not get a trace of him or of Theresa, and it therefore seemed pretty conclusive that they had gone off together. Of course a sharp watch was kept upon his sister, as it was thought she would be communicating with him, but she seemed as ignorant as anyone else as to her brother's whereabouts.

Colonel Ferraris was busy at this time in superintending the erection of a new villa he was building for himself in a fashionable locality in Buda. He had bought an old house, entirely pulled it down, and was raising in its stead a perfect little palace of a place. And it was said that as soon as his house was finished he was going to marry, one Madame Vertchikoff, a widow lady who had money; so that altogether the Colonel was considered to be an exceedingly fortunate man.

Of course Radnosky had heard the gossip about the sinking of the boat in which the Count and the Colonel were using for their fishing excursion one day, when the Count was nearly drowned, so he proceeded to discover the spot where the accident had occurred, and that done, he had the boat brought to the surface. Now, the reason that no attempt had been made to recover the submerged boat before was this—All the natives and dwellers in those swampy regions are exceedingly superstitious, and they say that a boat that has once been under water would, if used again, be sure to be fatal to those using her. So the owner, poor as he was, preferred to let his craft rot in the slimy ooze rather than attempt to get her up again; but it came out that the Colonel had compensated the man well for the loss of his boat.

When Radnosky got the boat out of the mud he had it dragged to the bank, and, clearing it of its

accumulations of slime and sand, proceeded to a minute inspection of it, with the result that he discovered in the bottom a large number of minute holes that had been made probably with a gimlet; but, whatever they had been made with, there they were, and it would have been an outrage on common sense to have asked anyone to believe that those holes were the result of accident. No, they had been deliberately made with a purpose, and the purpose was to drown Count Zanzky. Now, who had an interest in the Count's death? This it was imperative to determine, and Radnosky did it by a reference to Madame Herzog's will.

Still keeping his discoveries to himself, the celebrated detective hunted out Kovich, who nursed Madame Herzog in her last illness. Kovich was a woman well on in years, with rather a saturnine expression of face.

She was asked how it was she came to be a witness to Madame's will.

She answered that she was a witness because the will had been drawn up in a hurry, and as Madame thought she was at the point of death there was no time to lose.

"Had she seen the will written?"

"No," said Kovich, "she had not."

"Did she sign the will in the presence of the dying woman?"

"No, she did not do so."

"Where did she sign it?"

"In an ante-chamber."

"Who took the will to her?"

"Colonel Ferraris."

"Did she know the contents of the will?"

"No, she did not read it."

"Did Colonel Ferraris pay her anything for being a witness to the will?"

To this question Kovich replied with a distinct negative, but there was something in her manner and tone which to Radnosky's mind did not imply truth, and under his pulverising cross-examination it was hardly likely that such a woman could endure; so she gave herself away. She confessed that at first, thinking something was wrong, she had declined to append her name to the document until she had spoken to Madame Herzog on the matter. The Colonel, however, told her such a course was not necessary, but she insisted that it was necessary to make the document legal, whereupon he gave her three hundred kreutzers on condition that she signed and held her tongue. Being a poor woman, she accepted the money, and did as she was told.

The other person who had signed as a witness of the will was Maurice Farnese, but he was *non est*. Radnosky, however, resolved to find him. He ascertained that some days before his escape from jail Theresa left the place she had been living in at Buda-Pesth, and proceeded to Vienna, where she stayed two or three days. Just outside the hotel where she put up was a money-changer's office, and in his place she had converted about fifty pounds of Austrian money into English money.

That was a sign Radnosky made the most of, for what earthly use would English money be to her unless she was going to England? And as her disappearance from Buda almost synchronised with Farnese's escape from prison the deduction was—always having regard to the well-established fact that he had been her lover and the Count's rival—he had joined her, and they had gone off to England together. And, if that were so, some plan had been arranged for them—in all probability by a third

person. Otherwise, why did she go to Vienna some days before he escaped? She must have known he was going to escape, and she waited in the capital for his coming.

“Who was the third person?”

No one had ever for a moment suspected Colonel Ferraris of being in any way concerned in the Count's death. At any rate, nobody had had the daring to breathe a syllable against him; for he was a popular man and a rich man, and though it was more than hinted that he had led a fast and somewhat disreputable life that wasn't justification for bismirching his fame. So he went on courting the widow and building his grand house. But Radnosky had his own way of thinking, his own way of acting, and he learned that on the strength of the sympathy he bore for Maurice Farnese, who had been a good and faithful servant to him, the Colonel had several interviews with him in prison, and was with him for some time the night before he escaped.

Before travelling to England, whither he intended to go, Radnosky went out again to the scene of the Count's murder in the marshes, and with the assistance of some of the poor reed cutters he instituted a most minute search of the creek by means of an ingenious drag, which was so constructed and fashioned that if it got hold of anything at the bottom it was bound to bring it up. And, sure enough, after two days of patient labour Radnosky dragged up to the light a double-barrelled fowling piece—the barrels red with rust, the stock sodden with water. The name of the maker of the gun—a Vienna firm it was—was stamped on it, but there was no other name or mark. Radnosky carefully carried that gun to his house, and as carefully locked it up, for he felt certain it was the weapon that had been used to

slay Count Zanzky with, and that it would prove a very valuable *pièce de resistance* in fixing the guilt on the guilty person.

And now at this stage Radnosky went to London, where he had on several occasions been before, and as he spoke English almost as well as his native tongue, he was quite at home on English soil.

As various inquiries he instituted failed to place him on the track of those he was seeking, he had recourse to an advertisement in some of the leading papers, in which he asked for information of a young Hungarian lady who was supposed to be living in England and to be receiving money from friends either in Hungary or Austria.

Nothing could serve to illustrate the man's extraordinary acumen better than this. He never allowed any details of a case in which he was interested to escape him. He went to work with a thoroughness of purpose which left little or nothing undone calculated to make his way clear; and so it is almost needless to say that he had ascertained in Budapesth that, under the will which her aunt was supposed to have made, Theresa was entitled to the by no means inconsiderable sum of one thousand pounds a year. That is what it amounted to in the Austrian money. A certain portion of Madame Herzog's estate was charged with the payment of this money, which was to be drawn quarterly. Now, it was not likely that anyone entitled to that snug little income would forgo it under ordinary circumstances. And thus it came about that Radnosky hit upon the shrewd plan of making it a means of discovering the lady he was searching for. And it was a means, for in a short time he received an intimation from the London branch of a foreign bank that they received quarterly from a Vienna bank the sum of two hundred

and fifty pounds for and on behoof of a lady whom they knew as Mrs. or Madame Dronwitch, then residing with her husband in Edinburgh.

Within twenty-four hours of receiving that information Radnosky was in Edinburgh. The address given to him was one of the houses in Regent Terrace. He found it was a good house, and on a brass plate on the portal of the door was the legend—

“Peter Dronwitch, Professor of Languages.”

Radnosky, not, it may be supposed, in his proper person as Radnosky, sought an interview with the Professor, but he was absent at the time, and the visitor found himself in the presence of the Professor's wife, formerly Theresa, the niece of Madame Herzog. She showed no concern until Radnosky remarked :

“I believe, Madam, your husband's real name is Maurice Farnese.”

She changed colour then. She became red and white alternately, and she asked angrily :

“How do you know?”

“Oh,” was the cool answer; “as I know a good many more things. Perhaps my name will not be unknown to you. A good many people in Austria and Hungary know it.”

“What is it?” she gasped, with a frightened expression on her pretty face.

“Radnosky,” he answered curtly.

She showed signs of fainting when he announced himself, but by a great effort she recovered, and with a poor attempt at a smile, she said :

“Yes; you are the famous Austrian detective; but what of that? You have no claim upon my husband or on me. It is true my husband escaped from prison; but he did so because he was perfectly innocent of the dreadful charge brought against him.”

"I believe myself that he did not murder Count Zanzky, but still he ought not to have escaped, because no doubt he can throw a good deal of light on the crime."

The poor little woman shuddered, and with great difficulty restraining the tears that wanted to gush forth, for as tears are a woman's weapon, so they are a source of relief when her soul is overcharged with anguish, she said :

"I do not believe he can. He has been an ill-used man. He has been a victim to circumstances."

"I believe that also," said Karl Radnosky, in his peculiar dry way. "But, you see, your husband knows many things, he can tell many things, and out of those many things some may be of use in elucidating certain points that are at present a little obscure. Therefore I must talk to him."

"But you cannot, you shall not," cried the lady, with a renewed expression of fear, for beneath the calm exterior of Radnosky she fancied that there was a menace to her husband, whose liberty, if not life, was in danger.

"Well, you see, Madam," answered the imperturbable Austrian, "I have been to some little trouble to find your husband, and having come all this distance I can hardly return without the pleasure of making the professor's acquaintance."

"What do you want with him?" demanded the lady, getting very excited.

"I want to ask him sundry questions."

"To what end?"

"Ah, that remains to be seen. But he and I *must* meet. So please tell me when he will return. You need not let me interrupt your arrangements. With a book or a paper I can pass the time away. But, Madame Dronwitch—if you elect to be called so—do

not try to circumvent me. I am your friend at present. You might make me your enemy."

The man's manner, his words, his mode of uttering them would have impressed a much stronger-minded person than Madame Dronwitch. She certainly was impressed for the tears came at last, her pent-up anguish would be pent up no longer. But Radnosky consoled her. He had the gentleness of a woman, the heart of a child. Presently the door bell rang. The lady started up, and was about to leave the room.

"Stay," said Radnosky, "that is your husband?"

"It is, for I know the way he rings the bell."

"Good. Then you will remain where you are. I will let him in."

She recognised the uselessness of making any attempt to oppose this man, whose will was all powerful where he meant to have his way. So she remained silent, and he went forward to the door. The ringer was Maurice Farnese, otherwise Professor Dronwitch. His amazement may be imagined when he beheld Radnosky, whom he had often seen, and now recognised. Very pale indeed he was, as he said with a faint smile:

"I certainly did not expect to see you here."

"No, I suppose not. During my long career I have often turned up in places where I was not expected."

"My wife, my wife, have you seen her?" gasped Maurice in anxiety.

"Oh, yes. She is well. Come, we will join her."

So they went into Madame, and found her weeping bitterly.

"Beloved," said her husband, "why these tears? There is nothing now to conceal, it shall all be known as far as I have anything to tell. Question me, M. Radnosky, and I will answer."

"I will. Did you shoot Count Zanzky?"

"No; by the light of God's countenance I swear I did not."

"I believe you; but who did?"

"I did not see the shot fired, nor the hand that fired it, but I could swear it was Colonel Ferraris' hand. He knew that the Count and I were going out, in fact, he arranged the excursion, and he impressed upon me that I was to be sure and take the Count through the wood."

"You signed a will, purporting to have been drawn out by Madame Herzog?"

"I did."

"At the Colonel's instigation?"

"Yes."

"Did you see Madame write the will?"

"No."

"Do you think she did?"

"No."

"You believe then that the Colonel forged that will?"

"I do now."

"But you did not at the time?"

"I did not. The Colonel is a most plausible and persuasive man. He told me that Madame had just written the will, and desired me to sign it. I wished to see Madame before I put my name to the paper; but the Colonel said she was very ill, and I had better not disturb her. When I was arrested for the murder, I knew that all the appearances were against me, and how could I hope to combat anything the Colonel might swear to. So I was depressed and broken down; but the Colonel came to me and consoled me. He said that he quite thought the Count had destroyed his own life, but public opinion was dead set against me and I should have no

chance. He said the only plan for me, if I wished to save my life, was to escape, and he would help me to do so; and as I had been a good and faithful servant to him he would give me liberty and a wife at the same time. For he told me that Theresa was breaking her heart for me. How could I resist falling in with his plans? I had no hope except through him; and he offered me not only life but the woman whom I worshipped. He carried out his promise; he bribed one of the jailors to aid me to get out of the prison; he had planned for me to go to a certain house and disguise myself as a woman, and then proceed to Vienna, where Theresa was waiting for me; and he promised that, so long as we remained abroad, Theresa should receive her money regularly.

I confess that my conscience has troubled me; but still I should have kept silent had you not appeared. The sight of you convinced me that the time for silence had passed. I have told you a truthful story. I defy any living man to dispute it."

So far as Radnosky had gathered up his evidence he knew that the story he had listened to was veracious enough. What had to be done was to establish its truth. So he returned to Austria, having first exacted a promise from Farnese that he would keep in touch with him. But the young man saw for himself that he had nothing to fear now, so long as he did not attempt to thwart justice.

Within a few days of Radnosky's return to Budapesth Colonel Ferraris was lodged in jail. His arrest came like a thunderbolt out of a summer sky to him. He was still courting the widow; still busy with his house; but when the fatal announcement was made that he was a prisoner, he must have felt that his day was done.

Owing to the representations that Radnosky made

to the Government, Madame Herzog's body was exhumed, and the internal organs subjected to a most critical analysis by two of the most famous chemists of Vienna, with the result that they found distinct evidence that the unfortunate lady had been killed by vegetable poison. The poison was supposed to be a decoction of what was commonly known as marsh lily. Throughout those extensive marsh lands, which extend back from the Danube between Buda and Rutschuck, grows a small white flower of the lily tribe. At certain seasons the stalks and roots of this flower yield a rank, viscid, acrid liquor, which, on being mixed with alcohol, can be administered in small quantities at a time to a human being to the gradual destruction of health and life.

Pervintz, the housekeeper to the late Madame Herzog, and Kovich, the nurse, both swore that they had seen the Colonel pour something from a phial, which he took from his pocket, into her food or drink.

So the links were forged. The gun which Radnosky fished out of the creek was proved to have been the property of the Colonel. It had been bought new from the makers in Vienna, and of this there was the most direct evidence. There was circumstantial evidence to warrant an inference that he purloined the boat and punched holes in it in order that the young Count might be drowned.

Maurice Farnese and his wife were both brought back to Buda to give evidence, and after a long and exhaustive trial Colonel Ferraris was condemned to death. The sentence, however, was subsequently commuted, on some technical grounds, to his being interned for life in an Austrian fortress as a chained prisoner subject to hard labour. His property was all confiscated, and Madame Herzog's original will was

ordered to be registered as her only will. By that will, with exception of some legacies and charitable bequests, Theresa, her niece, became her heir if Count Zanzzy died before the will was proved. Maurice Farnese and his pretty wife had thus good cause to feel grateful to his sister, for it was due to her that Radnosky's talents were brought to bear on the Crime of the Lonely Marshes.

MRS. WYNNIATT'S SKELETON.

A STUDY IN PSYCHOLOGY.

THE case I am about to chronicle is sufficiently remarkable, I think, to be worthy of expansion from my rough notes, and of being set forth in detail. At any rate it is not without picturesque and even weird elements, and it must be admitted that they certainly lend an interest to a story.

It was just at the close of the decade of the fifties, and a lurid decade it had been, for it had witnessed the tremendous and disastrous struggle in the Crimea, and the great Indian Revolt, when our hold on our Indian Empire was nearly shaken free. People were looking forward to the dawn of the New Year 1860, in the hope that it might inaugurate an era of peace, but as everyone knows those hopes were destined to the blighted before a third of the decade had been swept into the gulf of Dead Time, by the breaking out of hostilities between North and South America. However, this is by the way, and it is not my intention here to deal with that remarkable struggle, although to a very small extent I saw something of it.

It was just about Christmas time that I received a letter from a lady whom I will refer to as Mrs. Josephine Wynniatt, asking me to call upon her at

her residence in Bruton Street, Mayfair, London. The address indicates that she must have been a person of means; for only those upon whom Mammon has smiled are able to take up their abode in that fashionable locality. As a matter of fact Mrs. Wynniatt was a wealthy woman. She was the widow of a gentleman who had for many years held a very important Consular position under the British flag, and he had succeeded to a considerable fortune on the death of his father. He had only one son himself, and that son had been such an outrageous scapegrace, that he cut him off with the fine old crusted shilling, and dying left his fortune to his widow, she thus found herself in possession of very ample means, and free before all her youth had faded from her.

When I first called upon the lady I knew nothing of her from personal acquaintance, but I had frequently heard her name mentioned, and I was aware that she was generally regarded as being eccentric. Dark hints were also let fall that there was some strange mystery in connection with her life; though no one seemed able to define the nature of the mystery. Certain bold tattlers, however, went so far as to say that she had been very unhappy with her husband, not from any fault on his side, for he, so it was asserted, had displayed a passionate attachment to her, but she could not bear him. Thus the rumour ran.

I regarded all this as so much society scandal which might or might not have some truth in it. But I was too much a man of the world to attach any great importance to frivolous gossip. The inherent meanness and spitefulness of human nature, unless kept in check by a well balanced mind, leads many people out of sheer wantonness, to assail in

a wickedly reckless manner the characters of their fellow beings. From the tongue-poison of these pests of society nobody's character is really safe, from the Queen on her throne to the quietest and most sedate of citizens.

On complying with the request contained in the letter to call on Mrs. Wynniatt at her house in Bruton Street, I was ushered into a superbly furnished morning-room by a powdered flunkey, and I had ample time to examine the rare articles of vertu, bric-a-brac, and other nick-nacks so profusely scattered about before Mrs. Wynniatt presented herself. She was a tall, stately woman, on the wrong side of forty; handsome still, with a dignified manner apt at first to convey the impression that she was haughty, even austere. But this impression was speedily removed when her reserve wore off in the course of conversation, and I came to the conclusion that she was a charming and attractive person, somewhat vain, somewhat weak. There was a pained and troubled expression on her face, as bowing with easy grace she seated herself in an artistic pose on a luxurious ottoman.

"I have no doubt, sir," she began after a few preliminary remarks, "that your varied experience has often enabled you to verify the trite though true proverb, that there is a skeleton in every cupboard. I am sorry to say I have my skeleton, and a very unpleasant one it is. My friends have told me that I ought to be the happiest woman on earth, and if worldly goods were all that were required to complete the sum of human happiness, then my friends would be right. In that respect I lack nothing; but in asking you to give me your services, I must take you behind the scenes a little and let you see the skeleton in my cupboard. You will infer, of course,

that I wish to avail myself of your services; and I may take it for granted that you will respect the confidence I repose in you."

"Certainly, madam, you may," I replied, as leaning back in my chair I watched the workings of her face. It was an exceedingly mobile face, capable of very many changes, and she impressed me with the idea that she could be peculiarly secretive when it answered her purpose so to be. In fact, I had no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that for a woman, she was unusually diplomatic, and not likely to give herself away readily under ordinary circumstances.

"Some time after my husband's death," she continued—"I may mention that for years he held a very important consular position abroad—my only brother, Richard Julyan, came to live with me here. This is a very tender subject indeed——" She applied, her handkerchief to her eyes, and seemed to be greatly distressed—"In his youth Richard gave great promise of developing into a brilliant man, and all his friends and relatives were exceedingly proud of him. This promise was maintained until he was about three or four and twenty. He graduated with honours at Oxford, and everybody predicted a future for him. He had the misfortune, however, to be remarkably handsome, and it was more than hinted that there were some shameful pages in the history of his College career. Be that as it might, he was engaged to marry a lady of excellent family, who though not rich, as riches are counted nowadays, were comfortably off. The lady, whose name there is no necessity for me to mention, was an only daughter, and her attachment for Richard can best be expressed by the common phrase—'She was madly in love with him.' It was soon made evident, however, that there was something wrong.

Richard appeared to avoid her, and at last he disappeared altogether. Means were taken to discover his whereabouts, and in the fulness of time it was revealed that even before he left college he had contracted a secret marriage with a woman with whom he had had a *liaison*, and who had borne him a daughter. "This woman—this *creature*—" Here Mrs. Wynniatt spoke through her clenched teeth, and her face was a study in its display of concentrated hatred—"This creature was without character, without shame, and the offspring of gutter people. When Richard first met her she was a singer in low-class London music-halls; and how my brother, brilliant scholar and a gentleman as he was, came to allow himself to be entangled with such a wretch, is one of those mysteries of human nature not easy to explain by any ordinary process of reasoning."

She had become a little excited, and paused, during which I took the opportunity to remark:

"Eve yet lives, madam, and man is still as weak as the Adam of old."

She failed to see the appositeness of this somewhat epigrammatic observation; for she exclaimed with an outburst of passion:

"Eve! Good gracious, man, you wouldn't liken *that* degraded thing to Eve."

"A daughter of Eve," I put in.

"Yes"—with a withering sneer—"a daughter of Eve. We are all daughters of Eve, I suppose."

"Alas, we men know it," I said with a faint smile.

"Well, Mr. Donovan," the lady continued, "we won't enter into any controversy. You men are all pitifully weak when a woman is in the question. Otherwise you wouldn't allow yourselves to be wrecked and ruined by women as often as you are."

"That is distinct evidence of woman's power," I ventured to say

Mrs. Wynniatt stamped her foot with a little gesture of impatience, and exclaimed:

"Pray let me finish my narrative. When the lady to whom Richard had been engaged heard what had happened, she nearly went mad—poor fool as she was—and ultimately threw herself away on a man whom she positively detested."

"How like a woman," I thought, though I did not dare give utterance to my thought for fear of arousing Mrs. Wynniatt's wrath.

"For some time I lost sight of my brother," she continued, "and when next I heard of him he was a wreck. His horrible wife, thank heaven, was dead; but he had sunk until he was an outcast—a degraded sot. Oh, how it makes me shudder and cringe to have to describe him like that."

"And his daughter," I asked; "what had become of her?"

The lady winced at this question, and she answered me with averted gaze:

"I don't know; nobody knew. He never mentioned her; but probably she too had died. Well, sir, for years I did all I could to reclaim Richard——"

"With your husband's knowledge?"

The question brought a little flush into her face; and she said quickly and irritably:

"Yes;" then she checked herself, adding, "why should I tell a falsehood over it? No, my husband did not know. I was ashamed of my brother, and I carried on my work secretly. Over and over again did Richard promise me to reform, and I supplied him with money in the vain hope that his manhood would assert itself, and he would rise from his degradation. But, alas, alas! it was useless. Still

I kept an eye upon him, though it was only to see him sink lower and lower, until he was shunned and despised by everyone, save my own poor self. He was so pitifully weak, so lost to every sense of self-respect, so dead to every consideration for the sister who still loved him, that he made not the slightest attempt to save himself. I heard that he had habituated himself to the use of narcotic drugs, opium in particular; and that he was chronically in a dazed and stupefied condition. At last he became a pauper inmate of a lunatic asylum."

Up to this point Mrs. Wynniatt had refrained from any outward exhibition of her feelings by an obvious effort, but the effort failed at this point of her painfully interesting story, and rising, she sobbed audibly, going to the window so as to hide her face from me. I remained silent, and presently she returned to her seat, saying apologetically:

"Pray excuse my weakness. As I was telling you, Richard was taken into an asylum; not because he was dangerous, or violent—on the contrary he was gentle, submissive, and yielding; but he seemed to be quite irresponsible for his actions, and incapable of looking after himself; and I being the only friend he had in the world, and as I had to do what I did secretly, I considered it the wisest course to let him remain under the mild restraint that was put upon him; but I took good care that he should be well attended. He remained there until some time after my husband's death; then as I was free to do as I liked, I allowed the undying affection I bore for this man to get the better of my judgment, and I conceived the—shall I say mad?—project, for mad it seems to me now, of trying myself to redeem him. I therefore released him from the asylum where he had so long been confined, and had him brought here.

Rooms were specially fitted up for his use and there was a liberal supply of books and other things likely to interest him. I engaged the services of a trusty man-servant, to do nothing else but look after him; and the rest of the servants in my house knew nothing whatever about Richard beyond that he was an unfortunate relative of mine. For a long time the secret has been well kept. Whatever rumours may have been set in circulation, the outside world has known nothing of the skeleton in my cupboard. Richard never went out. His rooms were large, airy, cheerful, and comfortable, and such exercise as he cared to take he was able to get there. But he detested physical exertion of any kind, and his chief delight was in reading. An old and esteemed medical friend has visited him periodically, and he gave me to understand that my brother had shattered his constitution far too much for any hope to be entertained of his complete restoration; but that in the circumstances in which I had placed him he would, in all probability, live for many years. It might be thought, having regard to the career he had led, and the half imbecile state into which he had hopelessly sunk, that his death would have been a blessing and a relief, but I could not bring myself to think so. Of course the world will call me weak and stupid. I cannot help what the world says, nor do I care. My brother was precious to me, and it afforded me some consolation in thus being able to watch over the man and see that all that worldly love and care could effect should be effected.

“But now I come to the *cruz* of this wretched story. A little more than a fortnight ago the man-servant was suddenly summoned to his home in the country to attend the death-bed of his mother. Not

caring to bring a stranger into the house, and thinking that Richard would be all right for a few days, I ordered my page to look after him during the day. All seemed well for a week, when one morning, to my horror and consternation, I was informed that Richard had gone. That, however, is not the worst part of it. He had made his way into my boudoir, which adjoins his rooms, and had ransacked it, breaking open the drawers and cabinets, and carrying off with him a considerable amount of valuable property in the shape of jewelry and trinkets. The loss of those things, though, does not concern me, although there are some family relics I should like to have back; but from one of the drawers he took a bundle of documents of the very greatest importance to myself, one of them being a deed relating to some houses of mine. It ought to have been in the safe keeping of my solicitor: but, some time ago, wishing to peruse it, I brought it here and foolishly retained it.

"You will now have gathered, Mr. Donovan, why I have sent for you. Such inquiries as I have in my own way been able to make have failed to obtain any clue to Richard, and I want you to do your best to trace him. I have told you his history and given you all the particulars I have, in order that you might thoroughly understand the position, and you will also understand how painfully sensitive I am on the subject, and how desirous that the whole matter should be kept as secret as possible. I wish to avoid a scandal, and though it may be impossible to induce the wretched man to return, you will, I trust, be able to recover the papers for me. As for him—well, he must now take his chance, though it is quite easy to predict what the end will be, nor will it be long in coming."

By the time the lady had finished her narrative there was every indication that she was deeply affected. In fact, if she had not been a woman of considerable strength of will she would have broken down entirely.

The inference I had drawn during the time I patiently listened to her, was that she had kept something in reserve, that, in fact, she had only told me half the truth. I gathered this from her manner, the expression of her face, the look in her eyes. Anyone used to studying the signs which the human face cannot conceal, knows how much may be learnt thereby; and when I came to reflect upon her story and subject it to a critical, mental examination, I arrived at the conclusion that Richard Julyan was *not* her brother, but her lover. The lady who had been "madly in love with him" when he was "a young man of brilliant promise" was herself. In desperation and despair she had "thrown herself away" on a gentleman whom she did not love; and during all the years of her married life she had, with characteristic feminine inconsistency, watched over the man she did love. And certainly it redounded to her credit and honour that when the death of her husband released her, and she might have contracted another and advantageous marriage, she preferred to sacrifice herself to a sentiment; for, after all, it was only a sentiment, inasmuch as she knew perfectly well that Richard Julyan could never be her husband. He simply represented the phantom of her early love; but to that phantom she clung. On this hypothesis could be explained the foundation for the various rumours, particularly those which ascribed to her an unhappy married life, with the love all on her husband's side.

I did not deem it advisable, at that juncture, to

tell Mrs. Wynniatt what my views were, but I expressed a desire to have an interview with the man-servant, if he had returned, who had had charge of Julyan. She said he came back two days ago, and she at once rang the bell and ordered the servant who attended to send John Hissop—that was his name—to her. Pending his arrival, I told her I should prefer to talk to Hissop alone. To this she by no means readily consented, and was anxious to know why I objected to her being present. I had to decline to give her any reason, and pressed my point, and seeing that I was inflexible, she reluctantly yielded.

As soon as Hissop entered the room I was struck by the keen shrewdness of his general appearance. He was the very type of an ideal gentleman's servant, of medium height, squarely built, quiet-looking, unobtrusive, respectful, without being in any way cringing. He was exceedingly neatly dressed, his face was clean shaved, his hair cut short.

"Hissop," I said, "you are aware, of course, that your charge, Mr. Julyan, has taken himself off?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have been looking after him for a considerable time, Mrs. Wynniatt tells me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now I want to know whether during that time you have formed any opinion about Mr. Julyan?"

"I have, sir."

"Will you tell me what that opinion is?"

"Well, sir, if you won't say anything to missus, I don't mind telling you."

"Oh, you may rest contented about that," I answered. "Mrs. Wynniatt has given me instructions to try and trace her missing brother, and I want to see if anything you can tell me will aid me in any way."

"Well, sir, what I've always thought about master is that he was precious artful."

"Artful!"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you mean by that?"

"What I mean is that he wasn't so bad in the head as the missus seemed to think."

"Did your mistress see him often?"

"Yes, every day."

"Did he talk to her?"

"Well—very little. She used to do all the talking; and he always seemed glad when she went away."

"Was there anything else in his conduct that struck you as being peculiar?"

"He used to wear under his shirt a portrait in a little case that was hung round his neck with a ribbon. Many and many a time I've seen him looking at that portrait; but he would never let me see it."

"You've no idea who it represented?"

"No, sir, I haven't."

"Can you tell me this. Had he, to your knowledge, ever been in Mrs. Wynniatt's boudoir?"

"Oh, yes, often. She used to let him go in there and sit with her."

"Were you present on those occasions?"

"No. I had to wait outside in the passage in case I should be wanted."

I did not question the man any further. My interview had elicited two important points. Firstly, Julyan was artful and cunning, like most men of his nature, and to a very large extent Mrs. Wynniatt was deceived in him. Secondly, he was, no doubt, well acquainted with the fact that she kept valuable property in her boudoir, and having got up in the middle of the night he had possessed himself of her

property, and then left the house by the front door. Those were material facts which were valuable. Now what were the probabilities? So far as I was able to reason them out by a process of logical deduction, they seemed to me as follows: In committing the theft he had been actuated by a motive not entirely selfish—that is, he was thinking of somebody else. I was confirmed in that opinion by his taking the title deeds. In an ordinary way they could be of no earthly interest, because he could not deal with them legitimately. Of course, having the deeds, he might try to raise a mortgage on the property; but before he could do that some inspection or survey of the premises would have to take place, and that would certainly lead to detection.

Let us try and define now who the somebody was he was likely to have had in his mind when he stole the deeds and jewels. Round his neck—according to Hissop—he wore a portrait which he was constantly looking at. It is a well-known psychological fact in connection with men who have destroyed their brains by dissipation and debauchery, that they often preserve a distinct recollection of some relative or friend, until the mental image becomes a sort of idol to them, which they worship. Now Julian had had a daughter. Mrs. Wynniatt never heard of the girl's death. Was it not likely therefore that she was living; that Julian wore her portrait; that his thoughts were always going out towards her, and with the remarkable cunning peculiar to nearly all forms of insanity—for it is right to describe Julian as being actually insane, though not so insane as Mrs. Wynniatt supposed—he had been biding his time and waiting his chance? What I wish to be understood is, that, according to my opinion, he was capable of appreciating his surround-

ings; of clearly understanding his position, and of reasoning things out for himself, so far as a fixed idea went. At the same time he lacked self-control, and the moment a chance occurred he would return again to his former habits, and soon reduce himself to gibbering imbecility. Therein was the kernel of his insanity; and that was where the necessity of restraint arose. While under restraint, such a man would be sullen, silent, crafty, watchful, and cunning. Such a form of dementia as Julyan was afflicted with is rarely accompanied by frenzy; and so the patient is described as "gentle" and "harmless." I have gone somewhat into details on this point, because I want to justify the conclusion I drew. Now let me look back for a moment. I have said that, in my opinion, he had but one leading and fixed idea in life. That idea was associated with the portrait. The portrait, in all probability, represented his daughter. Assuming that to be so, she was, so to speak, the one guiding light in his otherwise clouded mind.

Following this line of argument, and always bearing in mind the cunning of the man, another feasibility suggested itself. He would have intelligence enough to know that he would be hunted for, and, if retaken, be placed under restraint again—in all probability a much more secure and irksome restraint than any he had before experienced. Therefore, he would be careful to lie *perdu*; or, to use a less idiomatic, but more explicit, French term, *il se cacherait*. This might make it extremely difficult for him to be tracked in the ordinary way. To strengthen my suggestion about his being led by a fixed idea, which may have been haunting him for months or years, where would such a man, who had so long been shut off from the world, so to speak, be likely

to go to on finding himself once more free? He must have had some place in view; some plan well worked out and prearranged.

I have now endeavoured—and, I hope not unsuccessfully—to make clear to the reader the leading features which influenced my inferences and deductions, and having arrived at that stage I advanced another. I requested Hissop to see me again, and when he came I went straight to the point I wanted to reach.

“Hissop, have you ever conveyed letters or a letter anywhere for Mr. Julyan?” I asked.

“No, no, sir,” came the halting reply; and the manner of the man showed that he was not a good liar.

“Don’t deceive me,” I said. “This is a serious business, not as far as you are concerned, for I don’t know that it will affect you personally, though you may have posted letters for him.”

“Well, sir, I will tell you the truth,” he answered. “Some time ago, I think it’s between four and five months, Mr. Julyan asked me to post a letter, and said if I did so he would give me a sovereign; and that on a certain night I was to be at a spot that he mentioned, when, in all probability, a letter would be given to me to convey to him, and if I took him the letter safely he would give me another sovereign.”

“Where did he get the money from?”

“He had several sovereigns, which he had had for a long time, and used to keep them tied up in a large silk handkerchief, which he wore round his body, and would never part with.”

“And you posted the letter for him?”

“Yes.”

“Where was it addressed to?”

"I really forget; but it was some place in the east of London."

"What name was on the envelope?"

"I can't tell you. It was a very curious name; a foreign one I think."

"And did you get the answer?"

"Yes; I went one night to St. Paul's Churchyard, and carried a newspaper in my hand, by Mr. Julyan's instructions."

"That was to be a sign by which you were to be known?"

"Yes, I suppose it was. After I had waited some time a Chinaman came up to me and asked me if my name was Hissop?"

"Did he speak English?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, what followed?"

"He gave me a letter, and said I was to take it to Mr. Julyan."

"Had you any further conversation with him?"

"Not a word. He walked away immediately."

"You've never seen him again?"

"No."

"Have you ever taken any other letters for Julyan?"

"No."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite sure."

"Now tax your memory, and try and remember the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed."

"It was Mrs. Whang Sing; or something like that."

"It was Chinese, you think?"

"Yes, I believe it was."

As there was nothing further to be made of Hissop, I dismissed him; I felt I had got a clue now,

and a very important one, and I lost no time in acting upon it.

I proceeded to the East-end of London, where I instituted inquiries with a view to discovering if anything was known of an English woman being married to a Chinaman. Before long I ascertained that it was notorious that in one of the most evil quarters near Ratcliffe Highway, a Chinaman, named Wung Song, kept "a den" which was frequented by Chinese, Japanese, Lascars, and others; and that the presiding genius of the place was a young English woman. This was another important link forged, and I soon discovered that Wung Song's den was ostensibly a shop in a dreadful alley leading out of the Highway. The shop was an emporium for tobacco, sailor's knives, clothes, sea chests, boots, and the like. It was a dirty, squalid, wretched hole, suggestive of sordidness, craftiness, meanness, and wickedness of all kinds. My next step was to penetrate into this den and learn its secrets, for it had secrets, and dreadful ones I was sure. I was fully alive to the difficulties I had to encounter, for no open attempt to solve the mystery would be likely to succeed. Stratagem must be resorted to, and the form that stratagem should take had to be determined. At last I hit upon the following plan: I disguised myself as a sailor man down on his luck, and I mingled with the loafers, the crimps, the touts who infested that undelectable neighbourhood; and who were simply human rats or human sharks, whichever way you like to put it, ever on the alert for prey, and ready to turn and rend each other in their eagerness to secure the biggest share. At that period there was a place known as Green's Sailors' Home, which was situated not far from the entrance to the East India Docks. This home was the rendezvous for seamen

of almost every nationality, and where the prey was there were the crimps and blood-suckers also. At length I scraped acquaintance with a desperate ruffian known as "Dutch Sam." For years this fellow had pursued his unholy calling of living by his wits. He preyed upon the sailors. He advanced them small sums of money at enormous interest; he cashed their advance notes at an enormous discount; he took them to slop shops and procured clothes for them, charging four times the value of the goods and pocketing the balance. He was, in short, a leech who attached himself to a sailor man, and never dropped off until there was nothing more to suck. Being a tout and crimp, he was in the pay of all the dens of iniquity to which he lured his victims when they had any money to spend. Repulsive and horrible as the fellow was, I saw how he might serve my purpose. I told him that I had been in China, which was true, as I had spent many months in the early part of my career in Shanghai and Amoy. I gave him to understand that I had acquired a taste for opium-smoking, and wanted to have a few days of delirium in one of the East-end dens. I suggested that Wung Song's might be a desirable place, if the mystic portal could be past.

He grinned and leered at me as he exclaimed:

"'Taint no use your trying that slum, mate, unless you've got a few shiners, and even then Old Wung and his she-devil wouldn't let you go in without a passport. You see they're afraid of the police coming down on 'em."

"Who is the she-devil?" I asked.

"The white woman who lives with him."

"Who is she?"

"I'm blest if I know; and nobody else knows, 'cept Wung, and perhaps he don't know."

"And what's the passport that is required?"

"Well, you'd have to be introduced, and somebody would have to swear you was all right."

"Would you do that?"

"Of course I would, if you made it worth my while."

I drew from my pocket a greasy, worn-out purse, that I specially carried, and from the purse I produced a five-pound note: whereat his eyes became like goggles, and his gills watered with greedy expectancy

"Where did you get that from?" he asked with a breathless eagerness.

"Never you mind, I've got it." I answered.

"How much are you going to give me?" he demanded; his fingers fairly twitching to grasp the note.

"How much will Wung want?" I asked.

"Oh, I can work him for a couple of quid."

"All right," said I, "if you can do that you shall have the other three."

He fairly snorted with suppressed excitement. He was round, fat, and greasy like a porpoise, and he didn't breathe freely

"Come on," he said, "let us change the note." So away we went to a public where he was well known, and I converted the flimsy into coin of the realm. He tried to grasp the money as it was placed upon the counter for me; but I covered it with my hand, saying;

"No, you don't, Dutchy. You keep to your bargain. I'll keep to mine."

He seemed a little surprised, for his dupes did not often oppose him. I lifted the money; picked up a piece of newspaper lying on the floor, and in this I carefully wrapped three sovereigns.

"There you are, now," I remarked. "You get me into Wung's, and I'll slip that into your hand."

His bulgy face was very red with the anger he endeavoured to conceal, for he was not used to being bound down by any hard-and-fast compact, and his pride—for even such a wretch as he was had pride of a kind—was wounded. However, he snarled:

"Come on then, let us go."

So away we went, and when we reached Wung's shop it was dusk: but two or three guttering candles stuck in bottles about the shop enabled me to take stock of the place. Behind a narrow counter, that was heaped up with all sorts of things—tobacco, cigars, bundles of red cotton handkerchiefs, oilskins, etc., and on which were little stands containing smouldering joss sticks, which filled the air with their suffocating and foetid odour, was Wung, busy attending to his customers; for the limited space was crowded with Lascars, Chinese, and amongst them were two or three negroes. They all looked wretched, forlorn, cold, and miserable. Wung was an evil-eyed rascal; his yellow face deeply pitted with small-pox. The floor of the place was greasy; the ceiling perfectly black with the grime of ages. All round were shelves closely packed with goods, principally handkerchiefs, sailors' clothes, sea boots and oilskins, tin plates and pannikins. The babel of tongues was deafening; each man seemed to be talking against the other. At last Dutch Sam managed to get a word or two with the evil-eyed Wung, and when they had talked for some moments Wung beckoned to me, and elbowing my way to the counter, he said to me:

"You all wellee proper?"

"Yes," I answered. "I'm not going to blow on you."

"You want to makee big smoke; two or three days, eh?"

"Yes."

"You got muchee money?"

"I've got two pounds."

He made an exclamation in Chinese; then added in his pigeon English:

"Two pounds wellee little; you makee more?"

"I can't, I have no more. You can take that or leave it," I said sullenly.

"All right; me takee; givee me."

I handed him the two sovereigns, and lifting up a ragged, faded limp curtain at the end of the shop, he disclosed the entrance to a passage. He bawled out something in Chinese, and then bade me go in. But before I could do so Dutch Sam seized my arm. I knew what he meant, and I handed him the piece of paper containing the three sovereigns. Then I entered the passage, and the mouldering and filthy curtain shut me off from the shop. For a minute or two I stood, for as there was no light I could not see. But then suddenly a door was opened at the end of the passage, and rays of light streamed forth, but a female figure stood in the doorway and partly intercepted the rays; and standing thus, and but dimly brought into relief by the light, she presented an extraordinary picture. Her head was covered with a tangled mass of matted fair hair, and she was clad in what seemed to be a long flannel nightgown.

"Come this way," she said in English; but her voice was thick and ropy, and was like a rasp grating on one's nerves.

I went forward, and found myself in a little room. The walls were hung with dark coloured felt, and the floor was covered with the same material. There

was a long couch on each side, and a lamp was suspended from the blackened ceiling. The woman was about thirty, and at one time must have been fairly good-looking. Her hair was the colour of straw; her face was pasty, and suggestive of putty; her eyes were bleared, heavy, and stupid looking.

"Can it be possible, I thought, "that this is Julyan's daughter?"

"Are you Wung Song's wife?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered, with a snarl.

"You're an Englishwoman?"

"Well, I'm not a Chinese woman, anyway."

"But yet you've got a Chinese husband."

"And what if I have? what have you got to do with that?"

"Oh, nothing. It would not have been anybody's business, I suppose, if you had married Old Harry if he had been to your taste."

"Of course it wouldn't." Then as if to turn the conversation she said, "I suppose you've come here to smoke; haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Are you used to it?"

"Yes."

"That's all right. Then take your boots off, and come in here." She indicated a doorway before which hung a black curtain; and when I had complied with her request, she drew aside the curtain, and revealed a startling scene. No window was visible, all the walls being hung with felt; the floor was also thickly felted. On each side of the room running the whole length was a long low bench covered with carpet. While at the end of the room were what may be described as ship bunks; four one above the other. There were two or three small, round, Oriental tables near the benches, and on each

side, and on each table burned a tiny lamp. From the ceiling, which was black, like those in the outer apartments, hung a lamp enclosed in rose-coloured glass. The bunks were empty, save one; but all I could discern was that there was a man in it, though what he was like it was impossible to tell, as he was concealed in shadow. There were other figures on the benches; I counted eight; they were Asiatics, and they were all under the influence of the pernicious drug which they were smoking. The air of this chamber of living death was indescribably horrible, and the wonder was that any human being could exist in it; but it is astonishing what men can accustom themselves to. The silence too was that of a tomb, for the felt deadened all sound; and the narcotised wretches themselves, save one man, who seemed very restless, were as still and silent as corpses.

The woman prepared the end of one of the benches for me by placing there a dark coloured rug and a short round bolster. She told me to take my place; and when I had done that she moved up one of the little round tables, on which were a pipe, some tobacco, a lamp, a tiny tin bowl containing the semi-liquid opium, and a sort of bodkin to lift it up with. She next produced from a cupboard which I had not before observed, a small glass jar, containing what seemed to be black marbles. Removing the lid she offered me the jar, with the remark:

"Do you eat the stuff?" I answered, "No;" she grinned horribly, saying: "You don't know what life is then," and shaking two of the balls or marbles into her palm, she tossed them into her mouth and swallowed them. Then, replacing the jar, she left me. Filling my pipe with the tobacco, but avoiding the opium, I began to smoke, and when my senses

had become more accustomed to the place, I was able to realise the strange scene in all its weird details. That the woman, Mrs. Wung Song, as she called herself, was Julyan's daughter, I did not doubt for a moment. I even thought that she bore a strong resemblance to him, judging from his photograph which Mrs. Wynniatt had given me, and which had been taken during the time he was confined in the asylum.

Presently I arose and went to the bunk I have referred to, to see who its occupant was. He was a white man, and was steeped in a narcotic sleep, his face almost covered by the rug. I pulled this aside, and revealed Richard Julyan; but to be doubly sure, I put my hand inside his shirt to feel if he had the photograph which Hissop had spoken of. It was there, sure enough; and possessing myself of it, I went under the lamp, opened the case and gazed upon the likeness of an exceedingly pretty girl of about twenty, in whose features after I had studied them for a while I traced a resemblance to Mrs. Wung Song's.

Retaining the photograph, I returned to my couch and continued smoking: and whether it was due to the heavy, drugged atmosphere, or the tobacco, or both combined, I know not, but I gradually lost my senses and went to sleep. How long I remained insensible I don't know, but when I awoke and looked round I noticed that only two men remained on the benches. Julyan was propped up with bolsters in the bunk, and the woman was administering something to him out of a teacup. He looked ghastly in his paleness. His hair was dishevelled, his cheeks hollow, his eyes sunken, his face awfully haggard. He was more suggestive of a corpse that had been galvanized into motion than a living man. He groaned

and moaned, and she muttered something to him, though what it was I couldn't hear, for she too seemed to be in a maudlin state of stupidity.

I lay still and watched. When he had swallowed all the fluid that was in the teacup, his chin sunk upon his chest and he remained motionless. Then the woman, looking horrible and more like the creature of diseased and distorted imagination than a living woman, staggered across the room, placed the cup on a table, and coiled herself up on the bench, with her head on one of the bolsters. Half an hour later I rose, feeling sick and ill, owing to the dense fumes that permeated and saturated the mephitic atmosphere. I went to the bunk; Julyan was perfectly unconscious. I turned to the woman; she was in the same condition, and as there was nothing more to be gained by remaining there, I left. Wung was in his shop as I passed out. He was alone, for it was between seven and eight in the morning. He grinned at me and said: "You all wellee? Had good time?"

I nodded, for I could not speak; my head was in a whirl; I felt deadly sick. When I reached the open air, which seemed like heaven after the experiences of that hideous den, I staggered like unto a drunken man. I really felt as if I should sink to the ground, but I managed to keep up until I reached a thoroughfare, where I procured a cab and drove to my home.

It was not until two days had passed that I recovered sufficiently to be able to call upon Mrs. Wynniatt. I felt that it would not be kind to her to conceal anything, so I laid the whole facts of the case before her. She was inexpressibly shocked, and urged me to try and rescue Julyan; but I impressed on her the advisability of leaving him to his fate if

she wished to avoid a scandal and an *exposé* of her affairs, and I promised that I would try and recover her property. She did not readily fall in with my views; but I urged them upon her again and again until at last she consented.

A few days later I waited upon Wung Song, "clothed and in my right mind" this time. I told him that he was harbouring a man who had committed a serious theft—one Richard Julian. He flew into a passion, told me that I lied, and that Julian, who was his wife's father, had been there for a long time. I soon convinced him that unless he listened to reason, he would be inside a prison in an hour. That brought him to his senses, and I insisted on the restoration of the things Julian had taken away from Mrs. Wynniatt's house. He retired to talk the matter over with his wife, and after a time returned to me with the deeds, but he said the jewelry and trinkets had been lost. I did not for a moment believe him, but it was Mrs. Wynniatt's urgent desire that I would not make the matter public. Rather than that, she would have sacrificed half her fortune, she said; and so long as she got the deeds, she cared not a rap for the other things. What could I do under such circumstances other than what I did, which was to take her back the documents and let the matter end. I was determined, however, that Wung Song should not entirely escape, for he was a dangerous rascal, so I called the attention of the sanitary authorities to his premises, with the result that an official visit was paid him; and so horrible and dangerous was the den found to be that a magistrate's order was obtained to shut it up, and Wung was given a week in which to clear out. When that period had expired Richard Julian was found to be in a dying state; his mind had quite

gone, and he was a helpless imbecile, incapable of understanding anything or recognising anybody. He was removed to the London Hospital, where he lingered for a fortnight, when the Angel of Death wrote "Finis" on the last page of his strange history. Let me add, I ascertained beyond all doubt that Mrs. Wynniatt never had a brother. The extraordinary infatuation, therefore, that prompted her to cling to the weak-brained Julyan, and even when all hope had gone, endeavour to save him from his inevitable fate, is another instance of the lengths to which a woman's devotion will carry her—a devotion which has no equivalent in the other sex. No ordinary standard can ever be applied to gauge and measure the depth of a woman's love—a love that passeth man's comprehension.

I may mention that I made it my business to learn the history of Julyan's daughter, so far as it was possible to do so; but it is so remarkable, so astounding, that it forms a tale in itself, and I must reserve the telling of it for a future occasion.

THE DEED OF DEAD MAN'S MOOR.

WOLDHOLM, which is a quaint little Yorkshire market town with a population of nearly six thousand inhabitants, is situated on the edge of one of the great wolds. It is an ancient village, its origin dating back to Saxon times. From time immemorial a weekly market has been held in the village, when people flock in from all parts of the country. With the exception of this one day's excitement in the week, Woldholm is a dreamy Rip Van Winklish sort of place, and seldom does anything out of the ordinary occur to disturb the repose of the inhabitants. A good many years ago, however, an exciting little drama was enacted in the neighbourhood, and as I played a part in it, I propose to tell the story, which is so full of strong dramatic interest that it would be a pity to spoil it by merely bare outlines. I will therefore narrate it with the necessary details, and a due regard for the *mise en scene*. It is important I should state that at the period I am dealing with the village had been connected by a local line with the main line of railway running from the north to London. The nearest main station was York, and that was twenty miles away. As may be imagined, the local service was not very frequent, and on important occasions when despatch was imperative people would drive the twenty miles to York in order to

get the express train there for north or south as the case might be.

One bitter night in December, a young man named George Hargood, left Woldholm in a dogcart, driven by a sturdy country bumpkin, familiarly known amongst his associates as "The Flipper," but whose real name was William Paget. The object of Hargood in undertaking such a journey on such a night was to catch the midnight up express to London, as it was of the highest importance he should be in Paris the following night. His mission was a delicate one, and he had been entrusted with it by his employer, Mr. Millwater, the village banker. Young Hargood had been in the bank for some years, and had won a position for himself by his integrity and devotion to duty. When it became necessary for Mr. Millwater to send a special messenger to Paris to confer personally with one of his principal clients, who was temporarily sojourning there, he felt that Hargood was the most reliable person he could select, and as the journey was not decided upon until after the last local train had departed, there was no alternative, if the mail was to be caught at York, but to drive there, a distance, as I have said, of twenty miles.

In ordinary weather the journey was pleasant and easy enough, for there was an excellent road running over the wolds; but on a dark, snowy winter night it was different, and powers of endurance and hardihood were required for the drive. The worst part of the journey was that known as Dead Man's Moor; a wild, weird strip of moorland country at the best of times, but terribly so in the winter and in a snowstorm. Then there was not a little risk, for it was really difficult to keep to the road, which became obliterated by the snow, and no one would have thought of crossing the moor on a winter night except

under the pressure of circumstances. In Hargood's case the exigencies of the circumstances left him no alternative unless he had chosen to risk his position in the bank; and so in spite of the protests of his mother and his sisters he set off, leaving Woldholm about ten o'clock; and as the train was not due at York until three in the morning, there was ample time to accomplish the journey under ordinary conditions. But the weather, which had been bad for some days, had developed that afternoon into a fierce snowstorm, and some of the villagers who knew of Hargood's journey predicted:

"It will tak' him all his toime to get across the moor."

The Flipper, however, who was an assistant groom in Mr. Millwater's service, was an experienced driver. He had driven to York and back scores of times, and the mare he drove that night was also well used to the road. The vehicle was a light dogcart suitable in many respect for such a journey, but, of course, affording no shelter whatever from the weather to those who rode in it. But Hargood wore a heavy fur-lined coat, and in addition he had two woollen rugs. The Flipper, besides a topcoat, wore a Mac-kintosh cape, and he had a horse rug tied round his waist, while his head and face were protected by a sou'wester with flaps that fastened under the chin.

When the young fellows set off on their venturesome night journey, the air was thick with driving snow, and the wind was piercing. The Flipper, who was like a white statue on the driving seat, toolled the mare with consummate skill, but, occasionally, when the open moor was reached, the fierce gusts that came tearing down over the wolds caused her to shy, and now and again she came to a dead stand and displayed considerable nervousness, consequently

care and patience were required in the driving, but the Flipper bore up bravely and cheerfully. He was a courageous young fellow of about twenty, and having been born and brought up in the Wold district, he was familiar with the moors, both in fair and foul weather. On the present occasion he seemed rather to enjoy the situation, and now and again his exuberance of spirits found vent in whistling and snatches of song. The pace was necessarily slow, and Hargood began to have serious doubts whether in the face of such a storm he could reach York in time to catch the train. Not only was the road very heavy with snow, but it was absolutely impossible to distinguish it from the wilderness of white that stretched away on all sides. Considerable caution, therefore, had to be exercised to prevent accident, for if the proper track had not been kept a spill in some of the deep depressions of the wold would have been certain. But to a large extent the driver allowed the horse to exercise her own instincts, and though she evidently did not like the business she pegged away.

After a time the storm seemed to increase. The air grew thicker, the wind fiercer. No sound arose from the horse's hoofs, none from the wheels. It was deathly silent, and the prospect, such as it was, was suggestive of the Arctic regions during the long winter night. Young Hargood came to the conclusion that it was folly to have commenced such a journey under such atmospheric conditions, and at last even the Flipper began to display some anxiety, and frequently jumped down from his seat in order that he might lead the horse. The lamps of the dogcart were lighted, but the wet, blurred glass prevented much light from escaping, and owing to the air being so full of snow, nothing could be distin-

guished, more particularly as the steam from the panting animal's body encircled driver and traveller in a cloud of white vapour.

When this sort of thing had gone on for a couple of hours or so, and still the white wolds stretched around, the snow fell, and the wind blew, the Flipper for the first time gave expression to certain doubts about being able to accomplish the journey, for he remarked as he jumped to his seat after having led the horse for a considerable distance:

"I fear as how we wunnat get to York city in time, Measter Hargood. Drifts are too deep hereabout to put any pace on. But if we were across Dead Man's Moor t' worst part would be passed, and we could go ahead then. But I shouldn't wonder if we got stuck this side o' Deenes Dip."

"We must try and do the journey, Flipper," remarked Hargood, anxious indeed to carry out his instructions, and yet feeling that the chances were against him.

"Oh, ay, we'll try, of course; and we'll do it if it's to be done," answered the Flipper with the spirit of a true Briton, as he coaxed the mare to quicken her pace.

"How far is it now to Dead Man's Moor?" asked Hargood.

"Nigh on half a mile, I reckon, judging by the distance we've come."

"After we pass Deenes Dip it's all downhill, isn't it?"

"It be, Measter Hargood, and half a mile further on we get on to the high road, where we can spank along."

The fierce wind made conversation by no means easy, and it ceased, and as Hargood buried his face deeper in his upturned fur collar, the Flipper con-

tinued to urge Biddy the mare to renewed efforts, with all the cajolery at his command, and that was no small stock. The part of the route called Dead Man's Moor was the highest part of the wold. It derived its lugubrious name from the fact that in the good old times a couple of gibbets stood on the very summit of the rise, and could be seen for miles around, and these gibbets were seldom without a ghastly burden of mouldering bones. Our forefathers were not so squeamish and sentimental as we of the end of the nineteenth century are, and they had a rough and ready means of dealing with evil doers. Nowadays, if we want to flog the most brutal of garroters up rise the old women, male and female, and shriek themselves hoarse about the "degrading and demoralising" nature of the punishment, as though you could demoralise and degrade a human brute who would choke the life out of you for a few shillings, or who would explode a bomb amongst a crowd of women and children. Such wretches would have had a very short shrift at the beginning of the century. However, this is by the way.

At the summit of Dead Man's Moor a peculiar ravine stretched away east and west, and was known as "Deenes Dip." It was as if some convulsion of nature had rent the land there, making a long, jagged fissure that extended for miles. Owing to the shelter afforded by the sides of the ravine there was a luxuriant growth of shrubs and trees, which afforded shelter to flocks of game. Crime had been committed in Deenes Dip, for footpads had lain concealed, and sprung out on passing travellers. The spot lent itself to exploits of the kind, for the road descended abruptly into the ravine. Lonely pedestrians and solitary horsemen generally kept their eyes open when they reached the Dip, and relaxed not their wariness

until they had passed it. But Hargood and his companions did not concern themselves for a moment about the possibility of meeting with footpads or highwaymen at such an hour and on such a night. Even the rascals of the road would have thought twice before exposing themselves to such a furious storm. At night few people traversed the moorland highway except it was in the summer time. Then the market folk from the scattered villages sometimes used it, but they always travelled in numbers, and since the opening of the branch line of railway the road across the moors had been all but deserted, consequently the occupation of the ruffians had gone, in that region at any rate.

When our travellers on the present occasion came to the notorious Deenes Dip the Flipper jumped off his seat in order to lead the horse down into the hollow. And when the bottom was reached the light of a bull's-eye lantern was with startling suddenness flashed full in the mare's face, causing her to spring aside so abruptly and to plunge to such an extent that she overturned the cart. Hargood was shot out into the snow, and, being so swathed in wraps, was powerless for the time being to help himself. But no sooner had he fallen than a man sprang upon him and dealt him such a heavy blow over the head with a stick or life-preserver that he was completely stunned, and the blood flowed from his wound so rapidly as to redden the snow around him. While this was occurring, a second man had seized Flipper, and, throwing a sack over his head, twisted a cord tightly about his arms, binding them to his body so that he could not offer the slightest resistance. The whole business had been carried out so promptly and with such skill that neither of the victims had time to even utter a cry, not that there would have been

the slightest possibility of help coming to them in such a lonely spot. Nor had they had the slightest chance of catching even a glimpse of the fellows who attacked them, nor did the ruffians themselves utter a word.

The first man, having silenced his victim, proceeded to tear off his wraps, and then to search his pockets. As Hargood was insensible at this time, he of course, did not know what was being done. But, it would appear that the ruffian examined the young man's purse, which contained a considerable sum of money. Some of this money was subsequently found on the spot where the outrage was committed. The rest the fellow appropriated, and then thrust the empty purse back into the victim's pocket. Then from an inner breast-pocket of Hargood's undercoat the thief abstracted a pocket-book, which he carried off. That secured, the villains slunk away as silently as they had appeared.

When Flipper found himself released from the grip of the fellow who had held him tightly, notwithstanding the rope and the sack, he began to make the most desperate efforts to get free. And by dint of considerable wriggling and struggling he worked his arms out of the coils of rope, and got the sack off his head. He himself was uninjured, but for a moment or two felt dazed. He soon got all right, however, and then he made out that his companion was lying on the snow. At first he thought he was killed. He struck a light with some matches he carried with him, and set fire to a piece of newspaper in which he had carried some meat and bread in his pocket.

By the glare he saw that Hargood was ghastly pale, as white as the snow almost, and blood was flowing freely from the wound in his head. A little

way off the mare, attached by one shaft to the overturned cart, was standing quietly enough. The other shaft had been wrenched off when the cart went over.

The Flipper, having his wits about him, clapped a plaster of snow on Hargood's bleeding wound, which soon restored the young fellow to consciousness. When he had recovered his scattered senses, he examined his pockets in order to find out to what extent he had been robbed. Flipper made another torch of a piece of paper, and by the light thus afforded, Hargood ascertained that, though all his money had gone that was in coin, two five pound notes were left in his purse that had evidently been overlooked. His pocket-book, however, to which he attached more value than he did to his purse, for reasons that will presently be explained, had been taken away altogether.

As the bitter cold made it dangerous to remain inactive, the two young men righted the dogcart, which they did without much difficulty. Then while Hargood bandaged up his broken head as best he could with the appliances at hand, Flipper managed by means of handkerchiefs and some cord which was in the bottom of the cart to fasten the broken shaft. Of course they made no attempt to trace the author of the outrage. Indeed, it would have been worse than folly to have done so under such circumstances. And as it was useless to continue the journey, firstly, because they could not hope to catch the train as so much time had been lost, and owing to the broken shaft the horse could only be driven gingerly; and, secondly, because Hargood had been deprived of certain papers, without which his journey to Paris was rendered useless. He was now anxious to get back to Woldholm as soon as possible in order that information of the outrage might be given to the police,

and efforts made to capture the thieves. But everything was unfavourable to expedition. The storm seemed to rage with increased fury, and the snow had drifted so deeply that progress was painfully slow, while to add to their difficulties, the broken shaft kept parting, and Flipper was at his wit's end what to do until it occurred to him to cut a portion of the reins and make a strap to bind round the fracture, and even then it was necessary to lead the horse; consequently only a walking pace could be kept up, and it was six o'clock in the morning before the village was reached. Hargood felt very ill, for he had lost a good deal of blood, and was weak and faint. Nevertheless he made his way to the police station, where he gave information of the outrage, and that was all he could do, for he could say nothing about the thieves, as neither he nor Flipper had seen them. There were two men certainly, and there might have been more for aught the young fellows knew.

Having carried out this duty, Hargood went to his mother's house, and was got to bed as soon as possible, and Flipper drove back to his master's house. The mare no doubt was very glad to get to her stall, and when Flipper had rubbed her down, fed her, and covered her up, he went off to his bed, and slept soundly till one o'clock in the day.

During all this time the police remained inactive, and they accounted for their extraordinary indifference by saying that as the thieves had evidently laid their plans with such deliberation and foresight they would be sure to get clear off; and, moreover, the victims had not been able to furnish the slightest description of their assailants. Therefore all that could be done was to telegraph information of the outrage to York, and one or two other towns.

As soon as it became known in Hargood's household that he was injured, a doctor was called in, and he proceeded to dress the wound, and that done he gave the patient a sleeping draught. When the young man awoke it was mid-day, and being very much concerned he sent a message at once to his employer, and that was the first information Mr. Millwater had received, for when he left his home Flipper was still snoring.

As soon as the banker heard the news he walked over at once to the residence of his clerk, and questioned him about the outrage. Hargood could only tell the story in brief; he could give no details of the attack, for he was stunned at once. What he knew was, he had been robbed of all his loose money, and also of his pocket-book. That fact was a very serious and very significant one, for in the pocket-book was a document of considerable importance, and the banker was inclined to think that one crime had been committed to cover another. In deep concern, therefore, he went to the police station, and had an interview with the chief inspector, and was highly indignant when he learnt that no active steps had been taken to capture the rascals.

He told the inspector it was a far more serious business than he dreamed of, and that every possible exertion should be made to arrest the fellows. But the inspector said that telegrams had been sent off, and beyond that it was difficult to do anything, as they had no description whatever of the men. Flipper had handed him a morsel of a printed neck-handkerchief, which in the short struggle that had ensued between him and the man who threw the sack over his head—for it must not be supposed Flipper remained absolutely passive while that was happening—he had managed to tear from the fellow's neck. But the

inspector expressed an opinion that the "bit of rag" was not likely to be of much use. Mr. Millwater, however, took a different view, and begged that he might be allowed to have the piece of neck-handkerchief for a time, and so it was given to him.

He next hurried to his home, and severely questioned Flipper, whose description of the affair was as follows:

"All I know, Measter, is, there was a flash o' light, and th' mare plunged and reared, so that she overturned th' cart, and young Measter Hargood was pitched out. Then there was a sack shoved over me, and I tried to get a grip o' th' chap what did it, and I collared him by th' neck, but he had a scarf on, and a bit on it was torn away. I stuck to that bit, and I gave it oop at Police Station."

There was nothing more to be got out of Flipper than this, for the lad had nothing else to tell, and in his own mind Mr. Millwater was sure if Flipper had only had a fair chance he would have given a good account of himself in his encounter with the thieves, for he was a lusty young giant, with any amount of the Yorkshire pluck, so the next thing the banker did was to telegraph to me in London, asking me, if possible, to leave by the next train. It unfortunately happened that I was away that day, so I did not get the message till the following morning. I then wired to ask if my services were still wanted, and received for reply:

"Yes, come at once. Trap shall meet you at York. Otherwise you will have two hours to wait for local train. It is very important you should come immediately."

Although it was singularly inconvenient for me to rush off in such a hurry, I determined to go at once, and I got down to York soon after one o'clock.

Flipper was on the look-out for me. Of course, I did not know Flipper then, but he spotted me, and said his master had sent him to drive me back. I at once "cottoned" to the young fellow, as the saying is. He was a bright, smart, intelligent youth, reeking of the country, and yet far above the level of the average bumpkin.

Going out of the station I found a well-appointed trap in charge of a man-servant, and a powerful horse in the shafts. As soon as Flipper—he informed me that his name was William Paget, but that he was always called Flipper—as soon as he and I had mounted and tucked the rugs around us, the horse set off at a fine pace. The snow was lying deeply on the ground everywhere, and the trees were laden, while some of the hedgerows were almost hidden out of sight. London, when I left it, was wallowing, so to speak, in mire and sloppiness, with an atmosphere like a saturated sponge; but down in Yorkshire there was a hard frost, and a crispness of air that was delightful; while occasionally fitful gleams of sunshine lit up the snow-covered landscape.

As we drove along Flipper told me the story of the night journey during the snowstorm, of himself and Hargood, with all the incidents appertaining thereto, in almost the same terms as I have detailed it to the reader.

On the first blush it seemed to me that it was nothing more serious than a robbery by footpads from two unsuspecting travellers crossing a wild moor on a stormy night when everything was favourable to such an outrage; and I wondered why I had been sent for. But very little reflection caused me to change my views, for the request for me to go down had come from Mr. Millwater, who described himself as "banker," and I thought that he would

never have requested me in such an urgent manner to go all the way from London merely to investigate an ordinary case of highway robbery which the county constabulary ought to have been quite competent to deal with.

"Was Mr. Hargood robbed of much money?" I asked Flipper.

"Noa, zur, I don't think they took much money from him," was the answer, and that served to convince me that there was a good deal more in the affair than appeared on the surface.

When we reached Deenes Dip, on Dead Man's Moor, Flipper told me that was the spot where the robbery took place, so I alighted and examined the place carefully, and I asked him what had become of the sack which had been thrown over his head and the cord that had been used to bind his arms. Strangely enough, he had forgotten all about them when he had freed himself, and had not thought of taking them, for, as he said, he was pretty excited at the time. So I at once commenced a search, and after a time I found the bag under the snow, and the cord was not far off. The sack was an ordinary corn sack, and was marked "Taylor & Sons, corn merchants, Woldholm." The rope seemed to be a few yards of clothes line.

Thinking that something else of value from a professional point of view might be lying in the snow, we made our search as exhaustive as possible with the result that we found some money and a silver pencil case. The money consisted of various coins, including a sovereign, a half-sovereign, several shillings, and two or three half-crowns. The coins had no doubt been inadvertently dropped by the thief. As we failed to bring anything else to light, we proceeded on our journey, and after a very cold drive reached Woldholm, which looked singularly picturesque with its

covering of snow, and the fading light of the winter afternoon, bringing out with sharp distinctiveness all the salient angles, and particularly the old square-towered Norman Church, which was perched on a hill just at the back of the little town. Woldholm was an irregular, straggling place, built on a slope, and this heightened the picturesque elements. Flipper had received instructions to take me at once to the banker's house, which was known as Brookside. It was a large, old-fashioned Elizabethan mansion standing in extensive grounds, and being on an eminence, it commanded a very fine view of the country.

Mr. Millwater received me in his library—a handsomely furnished apartment. It was called “The Library” more by courtesy I imagined, for there were relatively few books, and what few there were were carefully shut up in glass cases. Some valuable little pictures, however, a few bronzes, and two or three exquisite Parian statuettes seemed to indicate that the owner of the house had art tastes, if not literary ones.

Mr. Millwater was a well-preserved man of about sixty, affable and gracious, and yet with a certain patronising air and a pompous bearing that to me were objectionable. But I made allowance for him inasmuch as he was, no doubt, the leading local magnate, and men who pass their lives in the narrowed sphere of a country town and are in the habit of being treated with deference and looked up to by the rural population are very apt to develop somewhat exaggerated notions of their own importance, which, if not annoying, are certainly amusing to the dweller in a great city, where a person must be somebody indeed to shine above his fellows. However, Mr. Millwater was a big man in his little way, no doubt, and though for a short time he rather gave me the im-

pression that he was an upstart that wore off as the conversation proceeded.

"I am very glad you have come, Mr. Donovan," he said with gruff heartiness, as he shook my hand as if I were an old friend.

"I have come at great inconvenience, sir," I answered, "and I venture to suppose you would not have sent for me if this affair had been merely a common highway robbery."

"Your supposition is correct," he replied. "It is a good deal more than that, and I am disposed to think that investigation may bring some rather startling facts to light. I knew it was no use trusting to the local constabulary here. They are as pig-headed and as self-opinionated as they can be. They are quite behind the times, for, you see, up to a recent period we were in a sense isolated from the rest of the world. Our letters were brought from York by mail coach, and it was only on the weekly market day that the place woke up; the rest of the time it slept. However, in the course of time the local railway will alter all that, and we shall become quite important. But at present these yokels have not caught the fever of excitement. They do not know what it is to hurry. They have never been used to hurrying. If they were in the village alehouse, and were told that a fire had broken out, and their services were required, very likely they would answer: 'We be coomin' when we'en supped oor beer and smoked oor piäpes. T' foire must wayät till we un ready.'"

There was something so comical in the idea of a fire having to wait until the bumpkins had finished their 'bacca and beer that I laughed heartily. And yet it seemed to me as if it fairly represented the bucolic mind of that part of the country.

"Pardon my rigmarole," Mr. Millwater continued,

"but I thought it was as well to give you some idea of the class of people the yokels of Woldholm are. Well, now to business. I told my lad Paget—or Flipper, as we generally call him—who met you at the station, to give you the particulars of a robbery that was committed three nights ago at Deenes Dip, on the part of the wolds called Dead Man's Moor. I suppose he did so?"

"He did."

"And he would stop at the spot where the robbery took place?"

"Yes, and I made a search there."

"With what result?" Mr. Millwater asked with peculiar anxiousness, and before I could answer he added: "you didn't find a pocket-book, did you?"

"No," I answered, "but I found some money; also an old corn sack, and a few yards of clothes-line."

"Those things may be of use," said Mr. Millwater quickly. "The local police would hardly know what use to make of them; but no doubt they will prove valuable to you."

"I note that on the sack," I answered, "is stamped the name of Taylor & Sons, corn merchants, Woldholm."

"You don't say so," exclaimed the banker. "Why, Taylor & Sons are the largest corn merchants in this part of the country. Now, how on earth did one of their sacks come into the hands of the thieves?"

"That remains to be seen," I answered. "Very likely the sack may prove a valuable clue."

"Ah, very likely, very likely. But now to give you some further particulars. My clerk was not waylaid on that terrible night for the sake of the money he carried, for ordinary footpads would not have exposed themselves to the risks and discomforts

bound to be encountered in such a wild place on such a stormy night on the mere chance of getting a trifle of money. The thieves knew by some means or other that the clerk was about to journey over the moors. Because now, except on market nights, the moorland road is never traversed at night time, more particularly in the winter. Only stress of circumstances would induce anyone to set out on that wild journey on a winter night, and during a snowstorm."

"Then, I suppose it was stress of circumstances in the case of your clerk?" I remarked, as the banker paused.

"Yes, indeed it was. He was bound on a most important mission, which permitted of no delay, and as there was no other way of his reaching London the following morning except by driving from here to York, the lad at my request courageously undertook the journey, but neither he nor I dreamed for a moment he would fall a victim to a vile conspiracy. And there is no doubt it was a conspiracy, for what the thieves wanted to get hold of was his pocket-book."

"Then the pocket-book, I presume, contained documents of value," I remarked as Mr. Millwater paused.

"It contained a document of value," he answered. "I must inform you that one of my most esteemed clients is a Mr. Philip Gregson, who is the owner of and lives at Ashley Hall, a fine old country mansion about twelve miles from here. Mr. Gregson is a local magnate as well as the lord of the manor, and he is also one of the Justices of the Peace for the county. For several years Mr. Gregson, who is a widower, has crossed over to Paris about this time to see his only daughter, who is studying painting

there, and having spent a day or two in Paris they journey on to Rome for Christmas, as they have some relatives living in Rome. You will presently see the necessity for my giving you these particulars. A few days ago, an order written on a sheet of notepaper, bearing Mr. Gregson's crest and motto, and dated from Ashley Hall, was presented at my bank. The order ran as follows, as near as I remember :

“ ‘Pay to bearer the sum of one thousand pounds, and charge to my account. I have unfortunately mislaid my cheque-book for the moment, and want the money immediately, as I start to-night for the Continent as usual.’

Here followed Mr. Gregson's signature, and though Mr. Gregson had never been known to draw out a cheque in such a way before, the money was paid, as there was no reason to suppose the document was not genuine. The cheque was presented at our very busiest hour, on our weekly market day, a day on which there is a great deal of excitement in the town, and the bank is generally pretty crowded for some hours. In the ordinary way the cheque would have been passed; Mr. Gregson's account would have been debited with the thousand pounds; and we should not have known that all was not right until the end of the year when the client's passbook was made up. But a couple of days after it chanced that the cheque fell under my notice, and, as I was very familiar with Mr. Gregson's handwriting, I was struck by certain discrepancies in the signature, and I also thought it strange that he should have sent for so large a sum in such an unusual way, for he is one of the most methodical of men, and exceedingly precise and business-like in all his habits. This led me to make inquiries, and I sent for my head cashier, Mr. Walter Freeland, who, it appeared, had paid the money.

"Of course, up to that moment he had had no suspicion about the genuineness of the document, and he was, as you may suppose, very much alarmed when I expressed my views. We compared Mr. Gregson's signature on the cheque with his signature in our books, and also with other writing of his in our possession, the result being that we both came to the conclusion the document was a forgery. Freeland was in a terrible state of mind when it dawned upon him that he had allowed himself to be victimised, for he is as a rule very careful and most trustworthy. He said that at the time the cheque was presented for payment the bank was crowded with the country people drawing out and paying in money. It was the very busiest of the few busy hours of the week. It is only on this weekly market day that we rise to any excitement in the town, and for those few hours the staff of the bank is taxed to its utmost. But very rarely, indeed, is there any error to chronicle.

"On this occasion, however, it was clear that an audacious forgery had been committed, and the bank would be the loser of a large sum of money. Of course, I questioned Freeland about the person who presented the cheque for payment, and he says that he took him to be one of Mr. Gregson's servants. He is described as a person of about forty, with a clean shaved face and having the appearance of a farm hand.

"As soon as the forgery was discovered I sent off a special messenger to Ashley Hall, and it was then ascertained that Mr. Gregson was in Paris, and had left on the day the cheque was paid, and he was to leave Paris the following afternoon for Rome. It was, therefore, too late to communicate with him by letter. That is, there would have been considerable delay,

while to have telegraphed would have been unsatisfactory. I, therefore, after consultation with Mr. Freeland, decided to despatch a young fellow named George Hargood to Paris that very night, entrusting him with the forged document for Mr. Gregson's inspection. In order that he might catch Gregson in Paris before he left for Rome, it was necessary for Hargood to drive to York to get the up mail train. The result was, he was attacked at Deenes Dip, and robbed of his money and pocket-book containing the forged document. The loss of that is a very serious matter, as you will see, because we are now without proof of the forgery. As soon as I heard of the robbery I posted a letter to Mr. Gregson at his address in Rome explaining the matter in detail to him, and asking him to telegraph his reply. That reply was as I expected it would be. He said that the cheque was a forgery. The delay, of course, has given the thief or thieves ample time to get clear off, and the possibilities are we shall not be able now to trace them."

"There I differ from you," I remarked. "The rascals, whoever they may be, are local people."

"Do you think so?" asked Mr. Millwater. "It occurred to me they were probably London sharpers who had made it their business to learn something about Gregson."

I felt sure that in this particular Mr. Millwater was wrong, and that the whole affair was of local origin. I pointed out to him that the thieves who had waylaid young Hargood on Dead Man's Moor had probably been employed by the forger in order that he might repossess himself of the forged document. This argued, of course, that he must have been previously informed of Hargood's intention to cross the Moor.

“But do you think the robbery on the Moor was a planned thing?” asked the banker.

“From what you tell me I should say that it undoubtedly was. The fellows ascertained by some means that Hargood was going to York, and they waited for him at the Dip, and though they stole his money, the forged cheque was what they aimed at. The sack and the cord had been provided to keep Flipper quiet, and the whole affair was planned with a regard for thoroughness of detail which points to a conspiracy and somebody who knows Gregson, and knows your business, it at the bottom of this.”

Mr. Millwater looked very serious, and admitted that on the face of it it seemed to be as I surmised, and he showed that he was disposed to think young Hargood might have had something to do with the affair as one of the principals, although he posed as the victim. But I told the banker that nothing I could see could justify that suspicion, though I had little doubt when investigation came to be made it would be found that the evil-doers were connected with the town.

I found on further inquiry that the money had been paid in notes and gold, and that the man who received it put it into a leather bag with which he had come provided.

Of course I lost no time in seeking an interview with Mr. Freeland. He was a young man of about thirty, rather an exquisite in his way; evidently proud of his full-flowing moustache, his good looks, and his clothes. He had been with Mr. Millwater for a considerable time, and great confidence was reposed in him. He was a single man, and his people lived in York, he himself being a native of that city. Young Hargood had been born in Woldholm, and was a highly respectable youth. He had been educated in

the village school, and Mr. Millwater had taken great interest in him, as he was the only son of his widowed mother, who had been greatly reduced in circumstances through a series of misfortunes.

Now it was very certain that the forger was well acquainted with the fact that Mr. Gregson kept a large account at Millwater's bank; he also knew that Gregson was going on the Continent, and he took advantage of that and of the busy market day to draw the money. It seemed probable, therefore, that the criminal, if not actually a member of the Gregson household, was indirectly connected with it. That household consisted of a lady housekeeper, a Mrs. Parton, who had been in Mr. Gregson's service for about five years. Then there were the usual servants, including a steward, a butler, and a valet. But the valet had gone abroad with his master. The steward was a Mr. Henry Braceridge, a local man born and bred, and had been with Gregson for nearly twenty years. I saw no reason to suspect him of any complicity in the affair. It was clear that several people had been mixed up in the crime, and that the presenter of the forged cheque must have had a confederate in the bank itself; that confederate had warned him of young Hargood's journey, and that he was carrying the forged cheque with him. If that document could be secured all evidence of the forgery would be destroyed, and the difficulties of proof would be increased manifold.

Without breathing to living soul that I suspected anyone in the bank, I proceeded to overhaul the employes, so to speak; and I endeavoured to learn just so much of each man as would enable me to form some opinion as to the likelihood of his lending himself to so serious a crime. When my investigations were so far completed, I came to the

conclusion that the one person whose conduct justified suspicion was Walter Freeland. This young man enjoyed the full confidence of his employer, and was in the habit of frequently visiting at the banker's house. At one time there had even been some love-making between Mr. Freeland and Miss Lucille Millwater, a charming young lady, her father's second daughter. Mr. Millwater, however, did not approve of the affair, and gave Freeland distinctly to understand that if he wished to retain his confidence and friendship, he must cease his attentions, and that was done. Since then Freeland had become engaged to a lady residing in York, and he was in the habit of going to York every Saturday afternoon, and remaining there till Monday morning.

It may be asked why I came to suspect Freeland, and though it has been said that one should never give reasons for one's opinions, I will do so in this case. Firstly, he better than anyone else knew how Gregson's account stood at the bank. Secondly, he himself paid the money, and though he of all men ought to have been cautious; and as it was so unusual for the customer to send for money in such a way, he ought to have taken particular note of the person who came to draw the money, and have even questioned him. But he did neither, and professed to be quite unable to give more than a general description of him. This seemed to me so irreconcilable with straight-forward business-like, not to say honest conduct, that I suspected Freeland of not being as honest as he wished to appear. Then, again, he alone knew besides Mr. Millwater that young Hargood was going to drive to York, and was carrying the forged document with him. These then are the grounds upon which I worked, and I set to work to make myself better acquainted

with Mr. Freeland, who as I learnt was deep in his master's confidence. Indeed, Mr. Millwater regarded him as exceptionally clever, and exceptionally trustworthy.

I found that Mr. Freeland occupied apartments in the house of a highly-respectable widow lady, who had two sons both in business in the town, and they both resided with her. In this family Freeland was regarded with great favour, and they thought it was rather an honour to have a gentleman occupying a responsible position in the bank lodging with them. Just about the time that the forged cheque was presented for payment a young man, whom Freeland described as his brother "Bob," came suddenly to stay with him. Previous to his arrival no mention had been made that he was coming. The day after the robbery he suddenly disappeared. That is, Freeland did not tell his landlady that his brother was going away. But the same evening at tea-time, said:

"Oh, by the way, my brother Bob is not coming back again." At this the landlady expressed some surprise, whereupon Freeland added: "The fact is, Bob is rather a wild boy, and he has some girl in London breaking her heart about him, so he's gone off to her. He's a most erratic fellow."

This incident of "Bob's" arrival and departure strengthened my suspicions, but, still, up to this point they were only suspicions, and I had not a scrap of proof. That is, such proof as the law would have required to substantiate a charge.

My next move was to wait upon Taylor & Sons, the corn merchants, and make inquiries whether they had any means of tracing a missing sack. They told me it was a difficult thing to do as a large number of the sacks were out in different parts of the country.

And although it was customary for people who dealt with them to return the empties when they were supplied with full ones, otherwise to pay for them, it was not always done, and every year a considerable number of sacks remained unaccounted for. I noted that the sack I had found at Deenes Dip was almost new, and I called Taylor & Sons' attention to this, requesting them, if possible, to inform me who was likely to have been supplied with a new sack. After consulting their books they came to the conclusion that the sack found at Deenes Dip was one of a dozen full sacks of corn which had been supplied to a Mr. Jackson, a carrier, who lived at a place called Brig-lea, some ten miles or so from Woldholm. Jackson, who was a regular customer of Taylor & Sons, and kept a number of horses, had sent an order about three weeks before, and the order had been duly executed. And as a number of new sacks had recently been taken out of the storeroom of Taylor & Sons, it was likely some of them were sent to Jackson. To Mr. Jackson I next went.

Briglea was a quaint little town, untouched at that time by rail, and Jackson was a splendid specimen of a tough old yeoman. He had been the local carrier for thirty odd years, and also farmed a considerable quantity of land, but did not grow corn for his own use. Investigation proved that one of the sacks sent with the last order from Taylor & Sons was missing, and Mr. Jackson could not account for its loss. He employed a considerable number of hands. In his carrying business alone he generally kept about twenty men and boys at work, and he had about a dozen more on the farm. Some of the men had been with him for a long time, but others again were fresh hands; in fact, he was constantly changing some of them, either because they were discontented, they

were incompetent, untrustworthy, or for other reasons. He remembered that he had discharged a man about a month before this for drunkenness, and he had also reason to believe the fellow had been guilty of some petty thefts, although owing to the difficulty in the way of proving them against him Mr. Jackson took no further steps beyond discharging him, and refusing to give him a character. The man was known as Jim Truscott, and he lived at a place called Brook Bottom, half-way between Briglea and Woldholm.

The foregoing information was elicited in reply to a series of questions I put to Mr. Jackson, and he deemed it not at all unlikely that Jim Truscott might have stolen some corn and carried it off in the sack; but, of course, Jackson hazarded no opinion as to how the sack came to be found at Deenes Dip. I began to think now, however, that I had struck a trail, even if I had not got a positive clue.

Brook Bottom was one of those truly rural spots which as yet have been able to preserve their far away time air, and where modern life seems out of place. There were about a couple of dozen houses in all, and the people were all engaged as agricultural labourers, excepting the keeper of the village inn, and the village huckster's shop, and the Squire was still looked up to as a great personage, the squire in this case being Mr. Gregson of Ashley Hall. Jim Truscott, so I learned, had been in the local militia, but was regarded as a man of somewhat vicious habits, and inclined to give way to drink. He had also for a time been in the service of Mr. Gregson as an under gamekeeper, but had been discharged because he quarrelled with his fellow servants. At this time, when my interest had become aroused in him, I found he was absent from his native place, and had been absent for over a fortnight. It was believed he

was in the city of York looking for work, and I gathered that he might be found or heard of at "Lorimer's Lodging-house" in York. Need I say that my inquiries were made in such a way that they were not calculated to arouse the suspicions of the bucolic minds.

On reaching York, where I proceeded without loss of time, I found that Lorimer's Lodging-house was a place with a reputation of a kind. It had been in existence for about half a century, and its patrons belonged chiefly to the vagrant class, who for a few pence could get a night's shelter and a breakfast. Jim had been there, but had gone off to London "on th' spree" with his "pal," Jack Frimble, and he had expressed his intention of "'listing" when his "brass" was all spent. Such was the gossip retailed to me by certain beery yokels, who seemed to regard Jim somewhat in the light of a hero. One of these gentlemen in a moment of confidence, the result of a tankard of ale I had treated him to, told me that "Jim's got 'old o' a bit o' brass, and I shouldn't be s'prised if he ain't got no proper right to it; but that there's naught to do wi' me or wi' yow, measter, be it?"

I did not quite agree with my friend as to its being no concern of mine, though I refrained from telling him so.

It seemed to me now clear that I was on the right trail, and I decided not to abandon it until I had ascertained where Jim put in his time on the night of the robbery at Deenes Dip. His "pal" Jack Frimble was a new actor on the scene, and the most I could gather about him was he had been on the tramp for some time, and was known to have been down at Woldholm. To follow these two worthies to London seemed somewhat in the nature of a wild

goose chase on the first blush, as I could get no information what part of the huge Babylon they were likely to be found in. They had never been to London before, and their going there was an event that had set their chums all agog, for London was a dream to most of these people, a dream of wonder and mystery, and when one of their kind talked of going there he was regarded with as much interest, as a man was in Queen Elizabeth's day when he expressed his intention of voyaging to the New World. It appeared there had been quite a little scene when the two adventurous travellers left for the great city. A number of their associates had accompanied them to the station, and Jim, with lavish liberality, had stood two shillings' worth of beer.

In following them to London I felt that my main chance of finding them lay in the probability that they had enlisted, as they said they would. If they had been enjoying themselves in their festive way with ill-gotten gains, it was exceedingly likely that when they had exhausted their stock—and with such fellows it is lightly come, lightly go—that they would offer themselves to some recruiting sergeant, thinking probably that they would then be safe from any pursuit if they had done wrong.

Before I left York I wrote a note to Mr. Millwater telling him that I thought I had got a clue, but that I deemed it of great importance he should not mention the matter to a living soul until he saw me again, when I might possibly be in a position to name the person who had forged Mr. Gregson's name, and thus succeeded in obtaining a thousand pounds. I spoke confidently, for I felt justified in doing so, inasmuch as I was instinctively certain Jim Truscott was in a position to afford valuable information about the robbery at Deenes Dip, if not about the forged

cheque. Of course this fellow was only a tool in the hands of a cleverer and more designing villain, and as two men had been engaged in carrying out the robbery, was it not likely that his "pal", Jack Frimble, had been his assistant? Men of their stamp represented an exceedingly commonplace type of humanity, incapable of any original ideas. They follow in a beaten track, and anyone who has made their habits and ways a study knows pretty well how to track them to their dens. No one could doubt for a moment that Jim and his companion had suddenly acquired wealth—that is, wealth to them. The improvident nature of such creatures leads them to look upon "a burst," in other words "a spree," as the height of human enjoyment. They think nothing of the after consequences. They aim at a few short-lived hours of delirium, when for the time their sordid lives undergo a change. This is a pitiable phase of human nature, but alas it is a very common one. Jim and his companion would soon exhaust their money in a day or two's wild revelry, and then finding themselves stranded in the wilderness of London what would they be likely to do? If they had belonged to the class of habitual criminals they would no doubt have consorted with their kind and have sought to replenish their exhausted exchequer by some other unholy deed. But they were fledglings, and the odds were in favour of their carrying out their avowed intention of "'listing;" for to such men the army is a refuge from immediate want and difficulty.

Acting on the theory I have set forth I proceeded at once, on my arrival in London, to make inquiries at the various recruiting depots, with the result that in a very short time I had run my men down. They had both taken the "Queen's shilling" in Westminster, two days previously, and were only then recovering

from the effects of their dissipation. I had no difficulty in obtaining an interview with them. They were both of them fine specimens of the yokel, full of muscle and stamina, and all the raw material of fighting machines. There was nothing of the stamp of the gaol bird or habitual criminal about them. They appeared to be a good deal more fools than knaves.

They were both very reluctant to talk about their escapade. To use a vulgar phrase they were "suffering a recovery," and were melancholy and miserable. When I proceeded to question them as to their movements about the time of the robbery they got confused, and contradicted themselves over and over again. First they vowed they were in York. Then forgetting that they had said so, they declared they were in Woldholm; and thus having woven the meshes about themselves I suddenly sprung a mine by exclaiming: "I am going to arrest you, and charge you with having committed a highway robbery at a place called Deenes Dip, on Dead Man's Moor, in Yorkshire. And unless you can furnish undeniable evidence as to what you were doing at the time it will go mighty hard with you."

This told upon Jim to such an extent that he began to blubber. His companion seemed to be more stolid and phlegmatic, and he expressed his opinion that Jim was a fool. But the soft spot in Jim's nature had been touched, and he blurted out:

"Me and my pal did it, because Master Freeland's brother axed us to do it." He then volunteered a full statement, which was, that Howel Freeland, the brother of Walter, whom they both knew, had promised them five pounds each if they waylaid Hargood and Flipper at Deenes Dip, and secured a pocket-book which Hargood was known to have with him. They both consented. Jim procured the sack from

his home, where he had taken it from Mr. Jackson's premises with some corn in it, he having stolen the corn for his hens. Accompanied by Howel Freeland they set off for the Dip, only a short time before Hargood started. At the Dip Freeland waited until the crime had been committed. Then he received the pocket-book, and all three set off for York. This confession made my course clear. I applied for a warrant for their arrest, and the military authorities had to give them up. After a preliminary magisterial examination in London they were removed to York in custody, the crime having been committed in that country.

As soon as I could I hurried off to Woldholm and had an interview with Mr. Millwater. As may be supposed, he was greatly shocked when he learnt that his trusted clerk Freeland had betrayed his confidence, for of course there could not be the slightest doubt that Walter Freeland had been in league with his brother. His arrest, which followed, stunned him, and at first he emphatically protested his innocence. Howel Freeland had disappeared, and a warrant was issued for his apprehension. He was a sailor by profession, and had only recently returned home from a three years' voyage, having sailed as third mate of a Liverpool ship which had taken emigrants out and brought a cargo of cotton home from China. The evidence that was gathered up left no doubt that he had been a mere tool in his brother's hands, and though he had forged Mr. Gregson's name—being able to imitate handwriting very well—he had done so at his brother's instigation. Walter, it appeared, had acquired a mania for speculation, in the hope that by some stroke of good luck he might make money as he was going to be married. But instead of making money he lost it, and got into such serious

difficulty that he was tempted into crime, and hap-
availed himself of his brother being at home to use
him as a confederate; and it was the brother who
actually presented the cheque at the bank and received
the money, which he conveyed to Walter's lodgings.
Then, when the forgery was discovered, this very
foolish young fellow thought to conceal one crime by
committing another, and in the two or three hours at
his disposal before Hargood set off on his eventful
journey he planned the robbery with his brother, who,
at Walter's suggestion, secured the aid of Jim
Truscott, who in turn had no difficulty in persuad-
ing his "pal" Frimble to join him.

It was a wretched story, and all the more pitiable
since Walter Freeland, who was on the highway to
a good and honourable position, had utterly blasted
his career, broken the heart of his sweetheart, and
crushed and humiliated into the very dust his doting
mother and sisters. If young men who are tempted
to go astray would only pause to reflect on the
awful suffering and misery they entail on those who
love them there would be less evil in the world.
But men go blindly into the path of wrong, and
reck not of the consequences until it is too late.
Then comes the hell of remorse and shame.

It remains for me to say that Howel Freeland
was never captured. He managed somehow to get
out of the country, which, he being a sailor, was
comparatively easy for him to do. At any rate he
did it, and was heard of no more. The other prin-
cipals in the miserable drama, after an exhaustive
trial at the York Assizes, received their due meed of
punishment.

THE STORY OF AN ANARCHIST PLOT AND HOW IT WAS FRUSTRATED.

AT a time when there is renewed activity on the part of the cowardly ruffians who call themselves "anarchists," it is not out of place to relate the story of an infernal plot that was hatched, and happily frustrated before its objects could be carried out, and I am pleased to say that nearly all the ignorant and worthless vagabonds who were mixed up in it got their deserts. No, not quite. It is true they were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment, but they ought all to have been hanged. Anyone guilty of preaching the wicked and detestable doctrine of wholesale and indiscriminate slaughter of innocent people, including women and children, is unworthy of God's gift of life, and should be hurried out of the world in which he is a mere excrescence. Time was when men had some regard for the principles of chivalry; and while ready enough to wage war against their fellow-men, and resort to all sorts of devilish devices for torturing them, the line was drawn at men; and women and children could pass on their way unmolested, and with a consciousness that if danger threatened them an appeal to manhood would bring them assistance. Surely since then man must have degenerated? He has acquired more knowledge than his ancestors possessed; he has penetrated into

every hole and corner of the world, and his inventive faculties have produced the most astonishing results; but he has apparently become more cowardly, more dastardly, more snake-like. If this is not so, how is it we are every now and again startled by outrages which make one shudder by reason of the fiendishness they display? I boldly declare that I have always been an uncompromising opponent of the revolting doctrine that society can be reorganised by dynamite and bombs. The idea of secret assassination must ever be abhorrent to all right-thinking people; and when women and children are included in the anarchist's propaganda of destruction, there are no terms in any language too severe to use in speaking of the dastardly wretches who spread it.

Men who preach this damnable doctrine of wholesale mutilation and death are invariably lazy, and for the most part ignorant, stupid louts, who, envious of the fruits of industry of those who labour—as it was intended man should labour—will resort to any deed of violence in order to possess themselves of that to which they have no legal or moral claim. That is the fundamental principle underlying all anarchism. By means of death, scattered broadcast amongst high and low, rich and poor, women and children alike, there shall be wholesale plunder, and an equal distribution amongst the thieves, supposing it possible that thieves could be honest one to another.

The leaders of this dreadful movement—which has been termed “A development of our social and enlightened progress”—are knaves for whom no punishment science could devise would be too severe. For they live upon their stupid dupes; they fill their purses and wax fat, without running the slightest risk, for when blood has to be shed and wrong done, these cowardly assassins take good care to keep out of

harm's way. They place too high a value on their wretched carcasses to run any risk, and their hideous work is done by the poor mad fools, who are told they are aiding a great cause by pitching bombs into crowds of inoffensive people. It is a startling commentary upon our "Free and enlightened England," with her boasted "humane laws which so jealously guard the sanctity of human life;" her loudly-trumpeted "respect for the rights and opinions of all men," that we should leave our shores free and afford shelter and protection to the human reptiles who are driven from other countries. It is surely carrying "freedom" to a verge of idiocy when we allow the most degraded specimens of the human race to openly preach murder and theft in our midst, and to plot and plan against the peace and security of neighbouring States. That is freedom, with a vengeance.

But a few days ago from the time when I pen this paper an ignoble wretch, who is allowed unmolested to issue every week a journal devoted to so-called anarchism, and advocating the most violent measures, openly stated at a public meeting in London—the "city of the world;" the "hub of the universe"—that he rejoiced at the Barcelona outrage. That is, he entirely approved of a bomb being thrown from the gallery of a theatre amongst a group of ladies and gentlemen, young and old, who were seated in the stalls, and who in a few moments were rent, maimed, and shattered; while into hundreds of hearts was carried the ineffable sorrow for lost loved ones. Children were rendered orphans, wives were deprived of their husbands, husbands of their wives, sisters of brothers, brothers of sisters, parents of their children, and the black shadow of sudden death was thrown over scores of erstwhile happy homes. All this was done in the name of "right," and in the heart of London an un-

mitigated scoundrel was allowed on a Sabbath night to express his entire approval of the hideous holocaust. No wonder that foreign nations are so embittered against us. No wonder we are branded with the names of "Hypocrites, maudlin sentimentalists, mock humanitarians." We deserve it all; and the day is not far distant when, having sown the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. The sooner it comes the better, for then and not till then shall we learn the important lesson that in order to protect ourselves we must close our doors to the vile scum of other nations, and exterminate that of home gathering. For it is a mockery, an absolute mockery, of the sacred principles of freedom and hospitality that we as a people who boast so loudly of our Christianity should throw our doors open for the admission of wretches so vile, so despicable, so devilishly cruel that other Christian and enlightened nations will not tolerate them in their midst; and from the safe shelter we afford these people they spread their horrible opinions to the ends of the earth, and by these opinions fools and madmen are influenced. It is a heavy charge to have brought against us that we encourage murder and sedition, and though it may make us blush and indignant when we hear it, it is nevertheless true.

This may seem a somewhat long dissertation, but it is exceedingly *apropos* to my subject; and no one who reads what I have written, if he be not an Anarchist, will think the language used a whit too strong.

It was just at the close of '73 that information was sent to the head of the Detective Department in London and by that department transmitted to all the centres throughout Great Britain, that a most notorious Anarchist, whose real name was Scipione

Rocca, was believed to have recently arrived in England, where he would project and endeavour to carry out outrages in different parts of Europe. Here is the detailed description of him copied from the official communication sent to England:—

“Real name—Scipione Rocca. Aliases—Marshal Valquerez, General Don Seco, Jean Valois, Adrian Puthon, Philippe Dargagan, Count Hertz, Karl Coester, James Rendle, Walter Smith, and others. Height—Five feet six. Build—Massive, thick neck, large head. Complexion—Dark, hair and eyes dark. Features—Regular, and much like a woman’s. Marks—Large scar on left side of head under the hair, result of sword cut; hairy mole on right side of cheek near the lobe of the ear. He is fairly well educated; has travelled extensively; has a quiet, reserved manner, except when excited; voice very feminine, low, and soft; he has scarcely any hair on the face, and sometimes he shaves this little off and disguises himself as a woman, a character he is able to assume so effectually as to deceive his most intimate acquaintances. He has lived in England for some time, and speaks the English language fluently. His age is between thirty and thirty-five.”

Here followed most voluminous details of the man’s career, in which he was described as being imbued with the most violent anarchist doctrines. He was known to be the instigator of many anarchist outrages in different parts of Europe. He had murdered a woman in Spain, for which he had been tried and condemned to imprisonment for life. Six months later, however, he effected his escape by stabbing to death, with a sharpened dinner knife, a warder and a soldier who were on duty. He was believed to have made his way into Germany after that, where he allied himself to a secret society that had for its object the plundering of the rich and the destruction of public buildings. He was believed to have been implicated in the attempt made in Berlin to blow up the emperor’s palace with bags of gunpowder. He disappeared immediately afterwards, and it was sup-

posed he went to Paris. A year later he was known to be living in that city with an actress of the *Châtelet*. They occupied apartments in the Avenue des Gobelins. At that time Rocca passed under the name of "Adrian Puthon," and described himself as a teacher of music. One morning his mistress was found to have been barbarously murdered during the night. Puthon had disappeared, and every article of value the unfortunate woman possessed, including a large sum of money, had been carried off.

The rascal's movements could not be definitely traced after that, but there was reason to think he went direct to Portugal. At any rate some months later he was arrested in Lisbon for committing a forgery on a Lisbon bank. The charge could not be substantiated against him, but before he was acquitted Spain applied for his extradition, and he was ultimately given up, but while being conveyed across the frontier managed to effect his escape during a heavy snowstorm. After that he lived in Lyons for some time under the name of Philippe Dartagan, and there was little doubt he was responsible for the murder of a police spy who had been deputed to watch him.

Such, in brief, were a few of the charges formulated against this wretch, and if only half of them were true he was a monster of iniquity, against whose hideous life every man's hand should be turned, and he should be hunted down as remorselessly as man-eating tigers in India are hunted.

The information sent to us came from France, by which country his extradition was demanded. I should add that it was not definitely stated that he had come to England, it was merely supposed he had. In face of the demand for his extradition the authorities could not, of course, be indifferent. Otherwise our magnificent ideas of hospitality and our bloated notions of

"freedom" would have enabled even a monster of that kind to move about as he liked, and to plot and plan all sorts of crimes to be committed in other countries. And this he could have done with impunity, and he could have spouted sedition, talked destruction, and howled forth slaughter until his lungs ached. No one would have taken any notice of him, that is, nobody in authority, but the idle, worthless loafers, who are found in every great city, would have listened a-gape to him, and he would have made converts by the score. But had he done anything against our own laws he would, of course, have been arrested, he would have got some worthy lawyer, who couldn't tell a lie, to descant upon his blameless life, and to discredit all the witnesses that might have been produced against him; with the result, that unless his offence had been a serious one, he would have been acquitted, or, at the most, fined. However, luckily, there was the demand for his extradition, and as France never refused to give up our malefactors when they went there, the authorities were bound to do something; and so I was commissioned to try and find out where the wretch was hiding. I should mention that it was further stated in the particulars sent from France that he was an adept at assuming disguises; this and his self-command had enabled him to elude justice; but when brought to bay there was no crime too terrible for him to commit in order to effect his escape, as had been proved in Spain and Portugal. It was clear then, if all this was free from exaggeration, that we had to deal with no ordinary criminal, and unless he gave himself away, his capture would not be easily effected. It happened that at this period London, in a way of speaking, was crowded with foreign cut-throats, and rascals of all classes. The close of the Franco-Prussian war had caused a perfect rush to our hospitable shores of

gentlemen and ladies who had distinguished themselves during the Commune by horrible atrocities. And though these distinguished French men and women would, under different circumstances, have railed against *Perfide Albion*; they were now glad enough to breathe her fog-laden atmosphere, and enjoy the freedom she accords to all and sundry. But apart from these Gallic murderers, thieves, fire-raisers, and pétroleuses, we had a fine collection of miscellaneous scoundrels from other countries. America—another delightfully free country where anyone is at liberty to plot and plan the destruction of any other country in the world without being molested—had contributed a large contingent of fenians and dynamitards. But as it was known that these gentry had designs against the “brutal Saxons” some watch was set upon them; for there were rumours that they intended to shatter and destroy in every town throughout Great Britain, while certain prominent public personages were to be “removed.” History testifies that to a very limited extent these threats were realised; and that in the struggle the gentle fenian and the warm-hearted dynamitard came off second best. We hanged a few in spite of the maudlin sympathy that was expressed for them by certain free-born Britons; and a few others were sent to recruit their health, and to work out the problem whether after all honesty is not the best policy, in Her Majesty’s criminal jails. Some of them, poor things, suffered in health; prison fare and discipline did not agree with their pampered constitutions; and so from time to time maudlin sympathy has been allowed to prevail, and these blood-thirsty human rats have been turned loose again.

We certainly *are* a remarkable people; at least some of us are!

As I had no particular interest at that time in

any distinguished foreigner who was breathing our free but fog-filled air, save Signor Scipione Rocca, I turned my special attention to trying to find out what particular part of the country he was honouring with his presence. Theorizing from what I had heard of the man's habits I did not think it probable he would care to rusticate in the provinces. A fellow of that kind didn't usually play second fiddle. The *rôle* of the Provincial was not in his line. He was a star, he was, of the first magnitude, and he couldn't lower his dignity by twinkling in some provincial town. He preferred to blaze effulgently in the Capital. All this, of course, was only an idea of mine, but it was founded on a very fair knowledge of the psychological idiosyncrasies of the criminal mind. Anyway I felt that if I was wrong, it was highly probable I might pick up his trail in London and follow it up until I came to his lair in whatever part of the land it might be.

As I have often stated in my sketches, there is a well-established and peculiar freemasonry, as well as a magnetic sympathy current amongst criminal classes, and the detective who overlooks this is not likely to score many points. This freemasonry and this magnetic sympathy keep them in touch with each other, and by moving amongst their haunts one may learn a good deal. I therefore decided to get an introduction, if possible, to Signor Scipione Rocca through the medium of some of his sympathizers. It must be remembered that we did not know at this time for certain if he had really come to England. The French police only supposed he had; but he seemed such a slippery eel, and capable of changing his skin so often that it was by no means certain he had honoured our shores with his presence. That, of course, had to be found out, and I set to work to find it out.

As most people know who know London, Leicester Square and its neighbourhood have long been the favourite haunt of the foreigner, the Frenchman particularly. In this classic region there is something congenial to his tastes. The consequence is it may be described almost as French London. Here are found French booksellers, cafés, restaurants, laundries, lodging-houses, French shops where every delicacy in the shape of *charcuterie* is sold. In the region of "Leec-es-ter" Square you can procure vermouth, absinthe, French papers, French cigars, and coffee *à la Française*, that is, inferior coffee—one-third coffee to two of the villainous stuff called chicory—exactly as it is drunk all over France. They manage *some* things better in France, but coffee is not one of them. However, this is a mere detail.

At the time I am dealing with French London was unusually crowded, owing to circumstances I have already referred to. The air resounded with the French language, and French customs were strongly *en evidence*, while occasionally as one passed a café or restaurant there came forth an odoriferous puff of garlic. In Rupert Street—a street that runs northward from the Square—and not very far up, was a large corner house—the property of a Frenchwoman, and let out in apartments, which were entirely occupied by French people. The lower part of the building was a shop, in which a French barber, who also sold all kinds of French periodicals, plied his trade. There was a private entrance to the building from a little side street; and in a recess in the wall of the passage, which was common to everyone occupying any part of the house, sat, during the day, a decrepit and curious little old man. He was the French *concierge* or doorkeeper. He was also a cobbler, and did all the cobbling for the household. At night he slept in a foul den at

the bottom of the passage, and a string led from the head of his bed to the latch of the door. By pulling the string he could lift the latch and give admission to anyone who sought it by ringing the bell which communicated with his den. On a bracket at a small window let into the wall of his room, if it could be so called, a lamp was always placed at night, and its light so shone that anyone passing along the passage to the stairs or *vice versa* came within the influence of the rays, and so could be recognised by the old *concierge* if he was on the alert. All this, of course, was very French, and no one could gain admission to the house by the passage after eight o'clock in winter and nine in summer without ringing the bell. During the day a lodger could get in with his latchkey, but the cobbler was always in his box then.

The house, which was a large one, had been the town mansion last century of a certain nobleman, when the Square was a fashionable place of residence and a favourite resort of the gentry. The growth of the great city, however, has changed all that, and the Square has degenerated.

As I've said, the particular dwelling-place I am alluding to was owned by a Frenchwoman, who possibly had left her country for her country's good. At any rate she had found shelter in *Perfide Albion*, and by some means or other only known to herself had acquired sufficient money to purchase the property, and by letting it out in apartments had made a good thing of her speculation. She was known as Madame Blanc, and she occupied the garrets at the very top of the house, together with a crippled daughter, who for years had been unable to leave her bed, owing to some peculiar disease of the spine.

It was rumoured that Madame Blanc hated the country of her adoption and everything in it. To such an extreme was this antipathy carried that she had never taken the trouble to learn the language, except to a very limited extent. And when she did condescend to use a few phrases they were so badly spoken that English people would have been more likely to have understood her native tongue better. For years this strange woman had lived there anathematising our country, our climate, our food, our customs, our institutions. She had lived in solitude nursing her invalid daughter, looking after her lodgers with a particularly keen eye to business, collecting her rents, and—doing heaven knows what with the money. As she paid her rates and taxes very regularly, and had committed—so far as was known—no offence against the laws of the country in which she had chosen to make her home, she was not interfered with and was free to do as she liked. How pleasant it is, indeed, to live in a free and Christian land where you can plot against every government under the sun, except the one which affords you its protection! In spite, however, of Madame Blanc being such a regular rate and tax payer, and never having committed any overt act that could be technically construed as an offence against the law, it was known that some of the lodgers she admitted to her house had made themselves notorious and infamous. However, the dear old lady could not be expected to inquire into the character and pedigree of every one of her lodgers. She wanted her rent, and she took good care to have it, and anyone failing to stump up at the proper time was bundled out. She was precious sharp about the rent, but as to what they did she didn't care a dump. It was known, however, to myself and to other men

who like myself were interested in watching the movements of our foreign guests, that Madame Blanc's house was the rendezvous for some very desperate characters, and there were strong grounds for believing that conspiracies had been hatched there. At this time one person who lived under the roof was known to be one of the most violent of revolutionists, and had made two attempts on the life of Napoleon III. He was an old and frail man now, but he used to saunter out regularly at meal times to get his food at a restaurant in the neighbourhood, which was patronised entirely by foreigners. His name was Chabot, and, having a universal reputation as a revolutionist, and—apart from his pronounced views—being a man of strong individuality, he was always a centre of attraction, and was invariably sought after by those who considered it advisable to leave their own country and come to ours for change of air.

I have already given my reasons for believing that Scipione Rocca was not likely to bury himself in the provinces. Now, if he elected to patronise the Metropolis, it was certain he would gravitate to French London. It was just as certain as that anything thrown into a whirlpool will be sucked downwards, after having gyrated for some time round and round. If he reached the Square, it was no less certain that he would come in contact with Chabot; therefore I resolved to keep an eye on Chabot. He was an interesting and central figure in that little section of London, for he was a picturesque man with long flowing white hair and white beard; and though infirm and old, he walked with a certain stateliness and grace that made him conspicuous, while his small, piercing, dark eyes, which had lost little of their pristine brightness, were as restless and watchful as

those of a hunted animal. Let it be understood that Chabot's walks never extended beyond the restaurant he frequented. In this restaurant he spent the greater part of the day, Sunday included. There he read the foreign papers, and there he met his acquaintances, and received those who came to pay him homage or discuss some weighty political matters, in which—probably—bombs and dynamite were to figure.

I was fully aware that I was not likely to learn very much by merely shadowing Chabot from his residence to his restaurant and from the restaurant back to his residence. Something more than that was wanted, and if I visited the restaurant in *propria persona*, suspicion would at once be aroused, for the visitors there, having much to conceal, were exceedingly suspicious of all strangers. I therefore hit upon another plan. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and this was a case where the utmost secrecy was imperative if anything was to be learnt. I was fortunate in being able to speak the French language very fluently, having partly been brought up in France. I was also dark of hair and complexion, so, getting my hair cropped *à la* Newgate, a fashion so dear to the heart of Frenchmen, I donned the attire usually affected by the French *garçon* or waiter, and applied to Monsieur Tierrot, the keeper of the restaurant in question, for a situation as waiter. French waiters in French restaurants in London are usually freshly imported, because the wages paid are low, and as soon as ever they have learnt a little English they betake themselves to the swell English restaurants, where so many foreign waiters are employed, and where the rate of payment is much better, and the hours not so long. To Monsieur Tierrot I represented that I had just arrived from Bordeaux,

and the end justifying the means I resorted to a few other necessary little fictions so that I might be able to carry out my plan.

Tierrot was a sharp, business-like fellow, and cross-examined me with no small skill; but I was too much for him. It ended in his telling me that he had a man he was very dissatisfied with, but he couldn't discharge him under a week's notice. If I liked to wait till then he would take me on for a short trial. If I suited I might count on permanent employment. The wages were to be three and sixpence a week—raised to five shillings after six months' service—and food and lodging. On my complaining that the salary was not princely he reminded me that I could count upon getting a *pourboire*, or, as we call it, a "tip," from every customer I waited upon. I told him that that being so, I would accept his offer, and in due course I entered upon my duties.

For the first few days I confess to a certain amount of awkwardness, but I soon got over that, though I could not so easily conquer an aversion to the food supplied and the sleeping accommodation provided. However, my zeal carried me through, and I soon became conscious that he who kept his eyes and ears open in that restaurant might learn a good deal; particularly the opinions these foreigners entertained for England and the English. But their opinions at that time had no interest for me.

I found that Chabot always occupied the same seat at a table in a corner at the far end of the room from the entrance door, and near a fireplace. I was informed he had occupied the same seat for years. By a little manœuvring with another waiter I got Chabot's table included in those I was to attend to. The first day I went to him, he looked hard at me, with his keen beady eyes full of an inquiring light.

"So you are a new-comer," he said in English.

I shook my head as a sign that I did not understand him, whereupon he addressed me in French.

"You don't understand English? I am glad of it. I hate the English tongue. Where do you come from?"

"Bordeaux, Monsieur."

"Ah! Bordeaux! By no means a bad place. I know it well. One does sometimes see the sun there. What's your name?"

"Charles Ganz, Monsieur."

"Umph, not a bad name. Ever been in England before?"

"No."

"Any acquaintances here?"

"None."

"Well, take my advice and be very cautious how you make any. You seem intelligent," he added, still scrutinising me.

"Thank you, Monsieur," I returned, with a profound bow.

"Now, look here, Charles Ganz, if you are going to wait on me you must be smart, silent, and anticipatory. I hate to have to ask for every little thing; nor do I like a waiter counting every mouthful I put into my mouth. Do you understand, Charles?"

"I think I do, Monsieur."

"Good. Now attend to me well, and you can count on having two sous after every meal, and once a month I shall present you with a shilling, providing I am entirely satisfied. If you don't get the shilling you will know that I am displeased about something. Stay, Charles; permit me to give you a word of advice as to what seems to me to be the primary duty of a waiter. Keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut."

I thanked him, bowed, and retired. He little dreamed how rigidly his advice would be followed. But what he meant was something very different to what I mean. He meant that a waiter should see at once when his customer wanted bread, mustard, salt, and such-like things; that he should be ever on the alert when called, but should not attempt to enter into any conversation unless spoken to.

Chabot came to the restaurant with the precision and regularity of mechanism. You could tell the time of day by his appearance. Being winter time he wore a large coat, a muffler round his throat, a large, broad-brimmed, soft felt hat, and white woollen gloves. He drew off his gloves very deliberately, and after stretching the fingers, handed them to me together with his hat, which I placed in a rack. Next I helped him off with his coat and muffler, and hung them up. That operation finished, he lowered himself with a sigh of relief, and perused the *menu*, having first swallowed at a draught a small tumblerful of the litre of red wine, which was always on the table ready for him. He called that draught of wine his "appetizer." For the first few days that I was there he came alone. Then after that for a time he was occasionally accompanied by a cut-throat-looking rascal—a man with iron-grey hair, bleared-eyes, a sallow complexion, and a sullen, hang-dog expression. Keeping my eyes and ears open, as Chabot advised me to do, I soon became aware that the cut-throat-looking individual was a most important personage. He was a foreigner, though at that time I could not quite determine his nationality. He and Chabot sometimes spoke in English, and sometimes in German, never in French. I divined that the object of this was that I should not understand. But as I understood my mother tongue a bit, could converse in French, and get on fairly well in

German, and being neither deaf nor blind, I learnt something.

Of course I had to pick up my knowledge in a very disjointed way. A phrase sometimes, a word now and again; but by studying these and filling in the blanks from the context, I gathered that the gentleman of the cut-throat appearance was a delegate from a revolutionary society whose head-quarters were in Belgium, that he had come over to England with letters of introduction to Chabot, and that business of a serious character was on hand. The nature of that business I was to learn later on; but up to that point I had gathered enough to feel sure that a sanguinary drama was about to be arranged, and one day I heard Chabot say reflectively in response to some remark made by the other fellow:

"Rocca! Yes, Rocca's a good man. He's reliable, desperate, fearless. I must put you in touch with him."

When I heard this I chuckled mentally, and some such thought as this passed through my mind:

"Yes, we will both get in touch with him, and possibly something will happen that is not in your programme, my brave gentlemen."

Up to this point my little plan had so far been successful, and my shadowing Chabot was the means of proving my surmise that he would be in touch with Rocca, correct. He had given himself away, all unconsciously, of course, and having got hold of the thread I was not likely to let it go. In watching Chabot I had necessarily to be particularly cautious, for he was as wary as an old fox that has been several times hunted, and I knew that the watched one watched me. If I seemed to linger longer at his table than was consistent with my duty he would say:

"Charles, what are you hanging about here for?"

I hate a waiter to be loafing about my table when he is not wanted."

I was aware also that he kept his eyes upon me, and my movements did not escape his observation. If therefore I had done anything calculated to arouse his suspicions my plan would of a certainty have been frustrated, consequently I had always to be on my guard, and, so to speak, keep an eye on myself. It was something, however, to have learnt from his own lips that he knew of Rocca's whereabouts, and so I lost no time in setting a colleague to shadow the movements of the cut-throat-looking man from Belgium, and report to me as early as possible. I speak of this fellow as being of "cut-throat" appearance, and in doing so I am quite within the bounds of strict truth. He was an evil-visaged man. The physical configuration of his face was suggestive in itself of villainy, but his fiery, restless, fierce-looking eyes seemed unmistakably to proclaim him cruel, blood-thirsty, ferocious. On the other hand, there was a sauvity in speech, and a polish in his manner and his bearing generally that were calculated to mislead, because unthinking people might have been disposed to say—"This poor man's looks belie him. His face is his misfortune."

I was sure, however, that he was even more dangerous in actual fact than he looked. His hands were plump, soft, and white, indicating that he had done no hard manual labour; but his fingers were disfigured by the nails being bitten down to the quick, and I noted that his finger tips were seldom out of his mouth. He was for ever biting and gnawing his nails. He dressed well, wore a diamond pin, several rings, and a massive watch guard.

In a few days my colleague informed me that he had traced the fellow to Lamb's Conduit Street, out

of Oxford Street, where he had apartments in the name of Eugene Marcet. He was living in the house of a German called Falber, who kept a tailor's shop, and who was well-known to the police as a man of violent socialistic views. He had several times been fined for obstruction by collecting a crowd together at some street corner and holding forth in inflammatory language on the sins of monied classes, and advocating a sweeping revolution in order to—as he termed it—“reorganise society on an equitable basis.” It was in the house of this man that Marcet, if that was his name, had taken lodgings, and that in itself was significant.

Having made this discovery, I felt that my mission as a waiter had been fulfilled, for I did not anticipate that Rocca would come to the restaurant. He would have been afraid to do that, and I had no doubt that he was lying *perdu* somewhere. The irksomeness and disagreeableness of my position may be imagined, and I was only too glad to be clothed and in my right mind again. When I told Tierrot that I wished to leave he was surprised, then angry. He wanted to know what I was dissatisfied with. I told him I thought I could better myself; but, anyway, as I was independent and my own master, I intended to do as I liked.

To Chabot I made known that I was going, and he expressed regret.

“I am bound to say, Ganz,” he remarked, “that, speaking for myself, you are one of the best waiters I have ever known in some respects. At any rate, you have been most attentive to me. You have shown a disposition, perhaps, to linger too long when I have been talking to my friends. But that no doubt is due to vulgar curiosity. You will cure the fault in time if you are ambitious of succeeding in your calling.”

I bowed, smiled inwardly, and thanked Monsieur Chabot for his good opinion of me.

Having got clear of the restaurant, I devoted my attention to watching the house of Madame Blanc. I was sure that house had its mysteries and secrets, and they would, in the interests of justice, have to be brought to light. People were constantly going and coming to the place. They were all foreigners, and amongst them was Falber, the German tailor. I saw him go one evening by himself, and he came away later on in company with the cut-throat-looking gentleman from Belgium. I sent a minute description of this fellow to the Belgium police, and asked if anything was known about him. In reply they wrote to say that they believed he was a notorious anarchist, by birth an Italian, who passed under various names, but whose real name was Caccioli. He was the leader of a strong revolutionary party which was being closely watched in Belgium. With these particulars a photograph of Caccioli was enclosed, and in that photograph "Eugene Marcet" was revealed. There was the same fierce expression of the eyes; the same villainous-looking face.

It was now pretty clear that some important business had brought this rascal to London, and the fact that he wished to get in touch with Rocca made it conclusive to my mind that some conspiracy was hatching. One day there came to Madame Blanc's house two women—a young one and an old one. They drove up in a four-wheeled cab, the number of which I was enabled to note. One of the women was old, and seemed to walk with difficulty, as if suffering from illness. She wore a large bonnet and a veil, so that her face could not be seen. Her companion was a young, good-looking woman, probably under thirty. She was intensely dark, with hair and

eyes the colour of sloes. The face was unmistakably of a foreign type. When they had passed into the house I went to the old cobbler, who was in his den cobbling shoes. He was a strange, bleary, foxy looking old man, with a voice like a rasp, that set one's blood curdling. Speaking to this man in French, I asked him if he could tell me if there was a room to let in the house. He looked up, and fixed me with his watery eyes. I don't know that I ever saw a human face that so closely resembled a monkey's. He would have done for Darwin's missing link. Having taken stock of me, he answered curtly:

"No."

Then he began to hammer and bang a piece of leather on his lapstone. I waited for a few moments until he put the stone down and busied himself with paring the leather with a small, sharp-pointed knife.

"I was told," I said, "that I might get lodgings here."

"Who told you?" he asked sharply, as he condescended to look up once more from his work.

"Well, I was told so."

"But *who* told you?" he demanded, with an emphasis and peremptoriness that spoke of an energy that one would have thought the withered old rascal was incapable of. He gibbered like a monkey; he snarled like an angry cat; and he held his sharp-pointed knife in a way that was suggestive of a readiness to prod me with it if I irritated him.

"That's my business," I answered.

He grinned until his toothless gums were revealed. Then he put his knife down; fumbled beneath his leather apron, produced a common horn snuff box, and having helped himself to a pinch with exasperating coolness, that was in marked contrast to his previous fieriness, he replied—"Well, Monsieur, keep

your business to yourself, and let me go on with mine. You ask me if lodgings are to be had in the house, and I tell you 'no.' That ends the matter, doesn't it? Now go. I am busy, and can't waste any time with idlers." I was amused with the old rascal. There was character in him. And shrivelled and ugly as he was, he had his wits about him. I therefore decided to try other tactics with the fellow, for cupidity was unmistakably marked on his face.

"Look here," I said, "don't make yourself disagreeable, old man. I simply asked you a question——"

"And you got an answer," he snarled quickly.

"I did, but I don't know who you are, or what authority you have to speak in the name of the proprietor of the house."

Once again he fixed me with his bleared eyes, and he took up his knife and held it vertically, with the handle resting on his knee.

"I will tell you what my authority is, Monsieur," he said. "I have been the doorkeeper here for years, and I speak in the name of the proprietor. Nobody comes here promiscuously. Anybody who wishes for apartments has to come strongly recommended. You see, it's a respectable house, and it wouldn't do to lower its respectability. Now then, you've got your answer. Will you go?"

"You are certainly an excellent janitor," I remarked with a laugh. "But now I will be candid with you, and if you will give me the information I desire, this coin shall pass into your possession." I balanced a sovereign on the tip of my finger as I spoke, and a greedy look came into his eyes as he raised his head and looked at the coin.

"What do you want to know?" he asked more suavely.

"Two ladies passed into the house just now."

"Well?"

"One a handsome young woman."

"Well?" with growing eagerness, his eyes still on the coin.

"Can you tell me who that young woman is? I wish to make her acquaintance. I have seen her before, and I am dying to know her."

He leered, and exposed his toothless stumps again as he replied, with something like a sigh:

"I don't know who she is."

"Come, come," I remarked, for I saw his cupidity was fully aroused, and that he could be corrupted with gold.

"I tell you I don't know," he growled. "I never saw her before in my life."

"What has she come here for then?"

"To visit a Monsieur Chabot."

"Could you find out for me who she is?"

"I might." This cautiously.

"Will you do so?"

"Yes; if you double the amount."

I made a pretence of hesitating, but finally said:

"Very well, I'll give you two sovereigns if you will tell me what her name is, and where she lives."

"I will do what I can," he answered. "Come tomorrow at this time."

I was about to take my departure when a shadow fell upon the doorway, and I beheld Eugene Marcet. I drew back, and made way for him. He glared at me from under his shaggy eyebrows. Then turning to the old *concierge*, he said in a low tone

"Importance."

It was evidently a password. The cobbler answered him with a look, and pulled a string which no doubt rang a bell upstairs, although I did not hear it ring, and Marcet passed on and went up the creaking stairs.

"Come to-morrow," said the cobbler to me in a tone that clearly indicated he would hold no further conversation with me then.

"All right," I answered, and I took my departure. But I did not go very far. I felt there was important business going on, and that there was a good deal to learn. I waited for over two hours. Then the *concierge* came out, and hobbled down the street, returning in about ten minutes with a four-wheeled cab. A few minutes later the two women reappeared, got into the cab, which then drove off. I followed it into Leicester Square, where I picked up a hansom, jumped in, and told the driver to keep the four-wheeler in sight. The chase led me to Upper Street, Islington. Near the Agricultural Hall the four-wheeler stopped. The two women alighted, the young one paid the fare, the cab was dismissed, and they directed their steps northward until they reached a short, quiet, but somewhat squalid, street, where they stopped before a house, and the young woman produced a key, opened the door, and the two entered.

This was something gained. I mentioned that I took a note of the number of the cab which brought them to Rupert Street. I found out the driver of that cab, and ascertained from him that he had driven the women from Upper Street, Islington. On the following day I presented myself to the *concierge* again.

"Well," I said, "have you discovered what I want to know."

"No," he answered surlily, "I have tried and failed." His manner was sincere, and left me no room to doubt that he meant what he said.

I expressed my regret, and asked him if he would be more successful if I waited a day or two. But he assured me that he saw no chance of learning anything about the women.

"They are friends of Monsieur Chabot," he said, "and Monsieur Chabot keeps his business to himself.

"Who is Monsieur Chabot?" I asked.

"A highly respectable gentleman, who has lived here for a long time. That is all I can tell you. Now, you can go; I do not intend to answer any more questions."

He evidently meant what he said, so I departed, and I turned my attention to the house at Islington. I found it had been rented for a year in the name of a Mrs. Blanche Philips. The landlord was a grocer in the neighbourhood. He said he was satisfied his tenant was a respectable person. She had paid a half-year's rent in advance. She had got some furniture on hire from a local tradesman, for which she had paid a considerable sum down. The young woman was her sister. The elder one was an invalid, and the business had been transacted by the young one, who spoke English with a foreign accent. All this was instructive and significant, and I set a watch upon the house, with the result that we found parcels were frequently delivered there, and other parcels as frequently taken away. Mrs. Blanche Philips also had a large correspondence, and a great many people went to the house; but it was noted that they always went after dark. One evening a cab drove up to the end of the street, and from it alighted old Chabot and Marcet. They did not go straight to Mrs. Philips' house, but walked past it, and glanced up and down the street as if to make sure they were not being watched. Their precaution, however, did not avail them. Almost immediately opposite Mrs. Philips' residence was a coal yard, that was reached by a gateway. Over the gateway was a joiner's shop. That shop was rented by an intelligent young fellow named Jackson, who, by his industry as

a joiner, managed to support comfortably and respectably a wife and three children. He had so far been taken into confidence that he allowed his workshop to be used as a coign of vantage for keeping an eye upon Philips' house. His shop consisted of a long room with two windows in it. At one end was a small room with one window. This small room, which was kept in darkness at night, was used as the watching place. Jackson worked in his shop, with the exception of Saturday and Sunday, until frequently ten and eleven at night. In the day time he went out to work. He had three or four gas brackets in the shop, and by request he kept all these flaring away while he was working. The object of this was that a stream of light might fall full upon the opposite houses, which it did, illuminating them most effectually, and the Philips' residence was rendered very conspicuous, so that nobody could go to the place or leave it without being seen. This little arrangement answered the purpose for which it was designed most admirably, and without causing any suspicion, for it seemed to be a perfectly reasonable thing that the joiner working in his shop at night should require plenty of light.

Chabot and Marcet being apparently satisfied that all was well, approached the house, knocked at the door, which was speedily opened, and they disappeared inside; and not until two hours had passed did they come forth again. It was now very obvious that the house was a rendezvous for the foreign rascals who preferred the free air of foggy London to the risks they ran in their respective countries. It was no less clear that the two women who rented the house were not quite the innocent and harmless creatures they appeared to be. Deception was being practised for some sinister purpose. And that purpose was

probably a desperate plot for the destruction of life and property.

So far as I had proceeded everything justified the conclusions I had drawn, but as yet I had not discovered Rocca. I was determined, however, that if possible the conspiracy, whatever it might be, should be frustrated, and that nothing should be left undone to try and root out the nest of scorpions who had so snugly sheltered themselves, as they thought. I therefore took means to have Madame Blanc's house closely watched night and day, also Falber's, the German tailor, and I myself gave attention to the place at Islington.

Two days after Chabot's and Marcet's visit I observed the young woman come out alone. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. She was most respectably, even well dressed, and her good looks were calculated to attract attention. She walked rapidly to the Angel at Islington, and got into a London Bridge 'bus. On the top of that 'bus I rode. When the 'bus reached the Mansion House she alighted and got into another vehicle going east to Poplar. I also shifted my quarters, and got on top of the Poplar 'bus, wondering what developments were to come out of this little jaunt. Why was this foreign woman going to the east of London? Not for any legitimate purpose, probably, all things considered. Anyway I did not lose sight of her, and I expected every moment to see her alight. But she kept her seat until the 'bus reached the extreme limits of its journey near the gates of the East India Docks. It is a long ride, as everyone knows who has taken it, and the mere fact of the woman coming to such a neighbourhood strengthened my opinion that she had not come for any legitimate reason.

It was now dark, so that her movements were

more difficult to watch: but I noted that she walked up and down for a little time, and seemed to get impatient, for two or three times she pulled out her watch, and looked at it by the aid of the light from a gas-lamp. It was pretty evident she was waiting for someone, and presently a man carrying a parcel done up in brown paper approached, passed her for a few yards, then turned back and spoke to her, and they entered into conversation. He had the appearance of a foreign seaman. His face was certainly not an English type. He wore a dark coloured cloth cap with ear-flaps tied up on the top of the cap with a bow of ribbon, and he was dressed in a pilot jacket, loosely-fitting trousers, and Wellington boots, into which the bottoms of his trousers were stuffed. In a short time he handed the woman the parcel, and in return she gave him some money from her purse. The two next walked to the starting-place of the city 'busses, where they stood talking until the 'bus was ready to start. Then he shook hands with her, raised his cap with the politeness of a foreigner, and helped her into the 'bus, which at once moved off. For a few moments I was undecided whether to follow her or keep in the track of the man. But my hesitation only endured for a few moments, as I felt sure that I might gather something by following him. He sauntered leisurely along the street, turned off a side street that led to High Street, Poplar, where he entered a public-house which was frequented principally by seafaring men. A few minutes later I also strolled into the bar. It was not one of the flaunting, flaring, glittering gin palaces which are such a conspicuous feature in London, but a low-roofed, dingy place, with a sanded floor, a pewter-covered counter, and small, plain deal tables, and forms in front of the bar for the use of the

customers. There was a perceptible reek of tar even above the other odours, and the crowd of men congregated there were unmistakably nautical. Foul cigars and pipes charged with the strongest of tobacco were being smoked, and the drink principally affected by the motley crew was rum, though some had beer pots before them. There was a perfect din of voices, and one with stentorian lungs was roaring out a nautical ditty.

My man had joined a group of four or five foreign-looking individuals, who were seated round one of the tables. As unobtrusively as possible, I made my way to the counter and ordered drink, a short pipe, and a screw of tobacco. Then I took stock of the fellow I had followed. He was a burly man, bronzed with hot suns to the colour of copper. I asked the man behind the bar if he knew what ship the foreigners belonged to, and he answered that two belonged to the *Santa Fe*, a small Italian steamer which was lying off Tilbury with "gun-cotton or something on board." He believed her destination was Naples. One of the two men he referred to was the man I had followed. In a little while I finished my smoke and left, and as soon as I got outside I hurried off to the Blackwall Pier, where I secured the services of a couple of watermen to row me down to the *Santa Fe*. It was by no means a pleasant journey, for the night was cold and very dark; but, fortunately, we had the tide with us, and went down pretty rapidly. We found the steamer moored in the channel specially reserved for vessels carrying cargoes of explosives, and I was only admitted on board after I had declared that I represented the law, and that my business was of the most urgent character. I at once sought an interview with the Captain, an Italian, who informed me that he had come from Newcastle, where he had

taken on board a quantity of dynamite and gun-cotton to be used for blasting purposes in the marble quarries of Carrara. He had put into the Thames to fill up with a quantity of petroleum, but owing to some infringement of regulations with regard to this cargo he had been detained, and was not likely to get away for another fortnight. He identified the man I described to him (the one I had followed) as one of his crew, by name Guy Gagliardelli. He was a Spaniard, not an Italian. Having learnt these particulars I said:

"Now, Captain, I have a serious question to ask you. Do you think it likely that Guy Gagliardelli has stolen some of your cargo of dynamite and gun cotton?"

"Santa Christ! no!" exclaimed the Captain in alarm and amazement. "Why should he?"

"Ah, that is another question," I said. "If my surmise is correct he has a strong motive, no doubt."

"But he would render himself liable to the law," urged the Captain, looking still more alarmed.

"Of course he would," I answered. "But there is something more serious involved in this than the mere theft of a few pounds of your dangerous cargo; therefore I must ask your co-operation to assist me in getting to the bottom of what seems to be a dangerous conspiracy."

"You may command me," said the Captain, laying his hand upon his heart. "I am willing to do whatever you wish me to do."

"Is it possible," I asked, "for you to discover whether your cargo has been tampered with, even to a small extent?"

"Oh, yes, I think there is no doubt about it."

"When can you let me know?"

"To-morrow."

"I suppose Guy Gagliardelli is on shore on leave?"

"Yes. His leave does not expire until twelve o'clock to-morrow."

Then if I come down here to-morrow, between ten and eleven, you think you will be in a position to answer my inquiry one way or the other?"

The Captain expressed himself as confident that he would be able to do so, and having smoked a cigar and drunk a glass of wine with him I took my leave, exacting from him a promise that he would keep my visit a secret.

I went up to London from Gravesend, and I could not help thinking, as I returned to the great city, that my night's adventure was not likely to be profitless. Indeed, it seemed to me that the net I had been spreading would, when drawn in, bring up a pretty good haul; and I was not without hope that amongst my catch would be the infamous and much-wanted Rocca.

True to my appointment, I went down the next morning to the *Santa Fe* and had another interview with the Captain, when he told me that in company with his mate and the carpenter he had that morning examined the cargo, with the result that he found that a case of dynamite had been opened, also a case of gun-cotton; and from each something like fourteen or fifteen pounds' weight had been abstracted.

I now informed the Captain that on the previous night I had seen Gagliardelli deliver a parcel or bundle to a woman who was suspected of being closely associated with a dangerous gang of anarchists, and in return for the packet the woman had handed him some money. The object of the transaction, therefore, could be readily guessed. By some means or other, yet to be learnt, the sailor had been communicated with and prevailed upon to steal some of

the cargo in order that he might sell it to the conspirators. Apart from the gravity of the mere theft, the serious nature of the crime could not be overrated, for while unlawfully abstracting the explosives the fellow might have blown the vessel and all on board to pieces. Then he conveyed the stuff on shore, carried it through the streets, and sold it to a woman who actually rode in a 'bus with it to London. It seems almost incredible, and yet what will the folly of criminals not lead them to do! When men and women engage themselves in desperate deeds they resort to desperate means to accomplish their wicked ends.

It may be easily imagined that the Captain—who traded regularly to England, and was well known—was in great distress, for he recognised that it was no light matter, and he asked me what was the best thing to do. I had no hesitation in advising him to communicate instantly with the police, and as soon as Gagliardelli came on board give him into custody at once on a charge of having broached the cargo and stolen portions thereof. The proof of the theft would be forthcoming afterwards.

My advice was acted upon, and I had the satisfaction of learning that afternoon that the Spanish sailor had been duly arrested and lodged in jail on the charge preferred against him by his Captain. I felt now as if the first blow had been struck, and that the net was tightening. It was very evident that the prisoner must have been in league with the conspirators, otherwise how was it he came to be in communication with the woman to whom he sold the explosives? The hour and place of meeting must have been prearranged either by correspondence or in some other way peculiar to the plotters. And I deemed it of high importance that the man's effects

which he had on board the *Santa Fe* should be taken charge of by the police, as it was very possible that amongst the things some compromising matter would be found which would serve to throw light on what was now shrouded in darkness. It will be understood now that I had presumptive evidence that in the house in Islington rented by the woman who called herself Mrs. Philips, a quantity of dangerous explosives was stored, and that was a direct infringement of the Act framed specially to deal with a case of the kind. Of course I could at once have laid information on the strength of what I knew, and have obtained a warrant to search the premises. But I considered that that course would have been premature, and some of the big fish I was so anxious to catch would probably escape from my net. I therefore decided to wait further developments, and to watch all the suspected people with increased vigilance. In order to do this I had to enlist the services of several trusty colleagues, and Madame Blanc's house, Mrs "Philips'" house, and Tierrot's restaurant were all placed under surveillance.

Up to this point I had got no trace of the rascal Rocca, whereat I was considerably disappointed. And yet I was certain he was somewhere behind the scenes, for had I not heard Chabot tell Caccioli, *alias* Marcet, that he would place him in communication with him? Had that been done? This question, which came into my mind at once, seemed to present one of the incidents I had witnessed in a new light. I had seen the two women go to Chabot's house, and I had witnessed the entrance of Chabot there also. Could it be possible, I thought, that the veiled woman was Rocca? The more I dwelt upon this idea the more it seemed to me not only possible but probable, till at last feasibility became conviction in

my mind. In the particulars sent from France about Rocca it was stated that he was an adept at disguising himself as a woman.

"Yes," I mentally exclaimed, "the person who poses as Mrs Philips is none other than the arch criminal himself."

As the matter had now become very serious I applied to have the prisoner Gagliardelli's effects examined. He had already been brought before the magistrates on a charge of theft, and remanded on my application, as I stated that I should very likely be able to bring forward very important evidence at a later stage. His sea chest, which had been given up by the captain of the *Santa Fe*, was now opened, and everything turned out. Amongst his things was found a bundle of letters. All these letters were written in Spanish and had to be translated. When this was done, we found that a great number of the letters had been sent to him from London while he was with his ship in Newcastle. His correspondent was a woman, who always signed herself—"Your loving cousin, Isabella." In the letters it was proposed that he should abstract from the cargo some of the dynamite and gun cotton, and it was arranged that he and the woman should meet at the spot where I saw them meet at Poplar, in order that she might receive the parcel for which he was to receive the sum of twenty pounds.

This was damning evidence against the prisoner, and it also showed how desperate was the plot in which the wretches were engaged. I now received a report that for some days past there had been a great deal of activity at the house in Islington, and Chabot and Falber were frequently there, and many people came and went every day. Gradually we accumulated an overwhelming mass of evidence. Correspondence

was intercepted and revealed the extensive nature of the conspiracy, which had for its object the simultaneous blowing up by means of bombs and other missiles public buildings in the principal capitals of Europe, and several prominent personages, including statesmen, military commanders, chiefs of police, and others were marked for assassination. The very thought of the wholesale murder and destructions contemplated by these infamous wretches was enough to appal one, and had the plot been carried to a successful issue the whole world would have been aghast. Happily the fiendish conspirators, all unknown to themselves, were gradually being drawn into a trap from which there would be no escape.

It had been noted that an unusual number of people always went to the Islington house on a Sunday evening, so it was decided that the grand *coup* should be made on a Sunday night. By this time a voluminous amount of evidence had been accumulated; and the police throughout Europe had been notified of the conspiracy, and put upon their guard. At length the day came when the net which had been so cautiously set was to be hauled in, and every precaution was taken to prevent the possibility of even the small fry slipping through the meshes.

It was Sunday, and a more disagreeable day it would have been difficult to imagine. It had rained almost incessantly the whole day, and a fierce cold biting wind added to the discomforts of the streets. A careful watch had been kept upon the Islington house from the joiner's shop, and when darkness set in a dozen picked men made their way to the shop one by one. On this evening there were an unusual number of visitors to the house, and we knew that in the course of the ensuing week the conspirators intended to carry out their nefarious designs unless

prevented. It was evident that they had no idea that they had been watched. In their own way they had acted with great caution, and done what they thought was necessary to protect themselves from being suspected. But they had failed, and an astounding disappointment awaited them.

When all the churchgoers had assembled in their respective places of worship, and the by-streets were deserted, for nobody cared to be out in such weather who was not compelled, several cabs unostentatiously assembled within easy call, and an additional body of men came upon the scene; and being reinforced by those who had already assembled in the joiner's shop, the house was gradually surrounded. All being ready I went to the door in company with a colleague, and rang the bell. In a few minutes the door was opened by the young woman "Isabella," and as soon as that was done I stepped into the passage and told her that I held the warrant for the arrest of everyone on the premises, as they were supposed to be there for an unlawful purpose. She turned deadly pale and uttered a warning cry; but it was too late. The police swarmed in and burst into a back room where a dozen persons were assembled, including the hoary sinner Chabot, the traitorous Falber, Caccioli, and Mrs. Philips, who proved to be none other than the notorious Rocca himself, while Isabella, as it subsequently turned out, was his wife, or at any rate the woman who passed as his wife.

On the table was a heap of printed leaflets of the most inflammatory character. These were being made up in packets to be despatched by post to various capitals in Europe. The consternation of these wretches, taken red-handed as they were, is not easily described, and that they would have made desperate resistance there is little doubt, for a number of them

were armed with revolvers and knives, and Rocca, besides a revolver, had two most formidable Spanish daggers concealed in a belt under the dress he wore. However, before they had recovered from their surprise. They were handcuffed, and then marched out, placed in the cabs that were waiting, and driven to the station.

A search of the house revealed a most startling state of matters. There were tons of anarchist literature, and in the basement, that is in the cellars, there was a complete printing plant, including the most improved handpresses. The literature was printed in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Russian; and it was all classified and arranged in a most business-like and methodical way. But in addition to these things there was a small chemical laboratory, though it did not seem to have been much used. There were bombs, dynamite, gun-cotton, fulminating powder, fuses, bottles containing phosphorus, a carboy of carbolic acid, besides various other chemicals and compounds, intended to be used in the manufacture of explosives wherewith to commit wholesale massacre. Fortunately the diabolical plot of the inhuman wretches, whose dreams and schemes were as Utopian and wicked as any that could have their birth in the brain of man, was frustrated just as it was ripe for execution, and I might be pardoned for experiencing some sense of gratification—shall I say pride?—that it had been my good fortune to have been instrumental in letting in the light on this dark conspiracy. At any rate, I confess to an intense feeling of satisfaction that I was enabled to bring to a close the career of Scipione Rocca, one of the most infamous beings that the century possibly has produced. Although he had committed an offence against English law he was, after some delay, handed over to

the French authorities, and removed to Paris. There he was tried for the murder of his mistress, the actress of the *Châtelet*, and being convicted of the crime, he was, I am happy to say, duly guillotined. The young woman who had shared his fortunes in England was a Spaniard, and a member of quite a respectable family. What she saw in him to be fascinated with is one of those psychological problems not easily solved. During the five years she was destined to spend in an English jail she was able, no doubt, to reflect upon the folly of her ways. Caccioli, *alias* Marcet, had come to London accredited as the representative of *The League of Liberty*, an organization of ruffians, having its head-quarters in Brussels. The objects of the league were the regeneration of society by massacre and the destruction of property. He had brought letters of introduction to Chabot, and was commissioned to find out Rocca and enlist his aid. He, Falber, the German tailor, and Chabot, the hoary-headed rascal, were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Chabot never regained his liberty, for he died of bronchitis in the course of the second year of his sentence. Gagliardelli, as well as all the others, also found out that though England might be the land of the free, it was by no means a desirable place to live in when one's life had to be spent in a criminal establishment.

Madame Blanc, who had so long given asylum to the "Patriots," who fled from their own countries, was brought so prominently into notice by the revelations that were made, that she deemed it prudent to realise her property, and depart for a more genial clime. The little old cobbler, who had cunningly played the part of watch cur, finding his occupation gone, and being friendless and penniless, was forced to seek shelter in the workhouse. But the change didn't suit

him, and he left this world in which he could never have known joy or gladness. Thus the nest of scorpions was cleared out, and although anarchism was not killed, it received such a violent blow that it staggered under it for a long time, and society was relieved of a terror which had oppressed it.



THE STRANGE TENANT.

IN going over my notes which embrace a period of upwards of thirty years, I am disposed to think that the case I am about to relate possesses unusual interest, for it presents us with some remarkable psychological aspects of human nature. To the student the study of man is fascinating to a degree. It is as complicated as astronomy, quite as full of mysterious surprises, and no less vast. To him who watches with untiring vigilance darker and deeper depths are constantly being revealed, until one asks one's self whether the human comprehension is capable of grasping or understanding the infinite possibilities of the human mind. "Man, know thyself" is a philosophical dictum, but it may be doubted whether man ever can know himself, let him study never so well. As an abstract principal I venture to think that this contains a great truth. At any rate human nature is such a varying quantity that just as you think you have mastered the problem of it your calculations are entirely upset by some undreamt-of factor.

This brief introduction fits the story I have to tell. I returned to my chambers one evening after an anxious and tiring day when I was informed that a lady had been waiting to see me for some time. I found her to be a woman of at least fifty. She had

a refined, thoughtful face, with soft brown eyes that were rendered more conspicuous by the iron grey hair that was carefully brushed over the intellectual looking forehead. Her dress indicated that she was in a good position in a worldly sense: and there was something about her that was decidedly suggestive of the Mint mark of the true lady. As she rose from her seat on my entrance she handed me her card, saying:

"Permit me to introduce myself—I have come up to London specially to seek your advice and assistance."

"Which are at your service, Madam," I answered, as I glanced at the card on which was engraved "Mrs. Lydia Staffler, Deepdene, King's Wood."

"I am the widow," she went on, "of the late General Staffler, whose name possibly you may have heard before."

"I think I have," I answered; "if I am not mistaken he greatly distinguished himself during the Crimean War."

A slight flush of conscious pride suffused her face, as she said:

"Yes, that is so, and the terrible hardships he had to endure served to hasten his end, for he returned home a wreck and only survived a few months. He left me with a son and a daughter. My son is in the Army and is at present abroad, while my daughter Beryl—who is now just turned two-and-twenty—lives with me."

"Where is your home, Mrs. Staffler?" I asked.

"At Malmesbury," she replied. "King's Wood is a suburb of Malmesbury. My late husband was a Wiltshire man and very fond of his country. He built Deepdene, and purchased other property in the neighbourhood. Amongst this property was a curious place bearing the uncommon name of Monksbell. It

is a large house standing in a park of fifty acres, and was built somewhere about the beginning of the sixteenth century. Although my husband paid a good price for it he was supposed to have got it cheap, for it had been in the market a great many years, but the trustees of the property had been unable to find a purchaser or a tenant. My husband tried to let it but did not succeed, and, dying, he left me a life interest in it. At my death it reverts to my son or his children. For a long time it was a white elephant to us, but about two years ago I succeeded in letting it for a term of years to a Mr. Tyler Vellacott, who had recently come from the Brazils where he had been the greater part of his life. His father was an Englishman, his mother a Brazilian. He represented himself as a rich bachelor who took a great interest in chemistry: and said he wished to live a quiet and retired life for the remainder of his days.

“From the first I thought he was eccentric. For a time he isolated himself entirely; he never received any company; he kept only one servant in the house—an ancient crone, whom he brought from the Brazils. He said her name was Rinaldo, and that she had been in the service of his family from her childhood. Some months ago he began to pay marked attention to my daughter, and one day alarmed me by asking me to consent to his marrying her. I say that I was alarmed, because I couldn't conceive that he would make her a suitable husband in any way. Beryl is a bright, cheerful girl; he is an old, withered, and gloomy man. Perhaps I need scarcely say now that I resolutely declined to accede to his request, and I probed my daughter to find out what her feelings were. She confessed that he had for a time fascinated her, but that the fascination had worn off and she

had come to dread him. I therefore gave him clearly to understand that he must cease to pay attention to her, and that it would be folly for him to dream for a moment of making her his wife. He seemed much cut up, but said if that was my decision he must abide by it. Some weeks ago I was horrified by Beryl confessing to me that the man had thrown a spell about her; that she loved him, and she declared that if I did not consent to her becoming his wife she would either go into a convent or destroy herself. I have reasoned with her; I have endeavoured by every means in my power to show her the folly, the madness, the sin of her conduct, but all to no purpose. She is resolute. She declares solemnly that her happiness, her life, are bound up in the strange old man, and for me to oppose her desires is unnatural and cruel. It is a fearful trouble to me, but what am I to do. Perhaps after all I am mistaken in Vellacott, and she may find her happiness with him. But I know nothing about him. His life is a sealed book to me, and to everyone else so far as I can ascertain; nor will he breathe a syllable of his past history. He says that he is rich and that is all that is necessary. I have managed, after much argument with my daughter, in exacting from her a promise that she will let the matter remain in abeyance for three months; and unknown to her I have come here to request that you will do what you can to learn the man's past history. If your report is favourable to him I shall then consider that I have no longer any right to oppose my daughter's wish, if it is then her wish to become his wife. Will you undertake this task?"

My interest, I will even say my curiosity, had been aroused by the lady's narrative, and I felt that Mr. Tyler Vellacott was one of those human riddles that

are well worth trying to read, and I consented to do everything in my power to that end. As I considered it of importance that I should have some personal knowledge of Beryl, as well as of Mr. Vellacott, it was arranged between me and Mrs. Staffler that I should go down to Malmesbury ostensibly as a possible tenant for a small villa she had to let. This plan it was considered would prevent any suspicion of my true object being raised, and give me practically a free hand.

So it came about that a week later I found myself in the quaint and historical town of Malmesbury which as everyone is aware figured very prominently in the struggle between King Stephen and the Empress Maud; and it witnessed many a sanguinary encounter during the civil wars of Charles the First's reign. It also had the proud distinction of possessing the finest and wealthiest Benedictine Abbey in England, Glastonbury excepted. The town being built on an eminence commands five views of the beautiful rolling country by which it is surrounded, and the classic Avon may be said to wash the foundations of some of its ancient houses.

The evening of my arrival I dined at Mrs. Staffler's house, and made the acquaintance of her daughter who in some respects was a remarkable looking girl. She was exceedingly fair, with a delicate pink and white complexion, small features, languid, dreamy blue eyes, and a great quantity of straw coloured hair. There could be no disputing that she was an unusually pretty young woman, with a well shaped figure, a graceful carriage, and a general picturesque appearance. But the opinion I formed of her mental characteristics was that she was vain, secretive, weak-minded, and inclined to be morbidly sentimental. My next step was to learn something about Mr. Tyler

Vellacott, and I secured quarters for a few days in one of the local hotels. As soon as practicable I went out to "Monksbell," which I found to be a gloomy old mansion, with mullioned windows, massive chimney stacks, quaint gables, and terraced walks round about it. An air of melancholy seemed to have settled on the place, and this melancholy was further enhanced by the neglected state of the grounds which were more suggestive of a jungle than a private park in connection with a gentleman's residence. All the paths were overrun with grass and weeds; trees crowded each other to such an extent that they illustrated in a peculiarly mournful way nature's law of the survival of the fittest. Those which had been unable to endure the struggle were decaying or dead, and the air was filled with an odour of damp mould, and rotting vegetation. Even in the immediate neighbourhood of the house, where at one time had been well ordered lawns, trimmed shrubberies and carefully tended paths, neglect was painfully apparent. In front of the house was a balustraded terrace, with a broad flight of stone steps leading down to the lawn. The balustrade was all overrun with a thick straggling growth of ivy; the steps were green with moss and slime; weeds choked the paths, the lawns were covered with layers of damp, mildewed leaves, a fountain basin was filled up with a mass of black rotting vegetation, and a statue of a Cupid with a bow lay broken and encrusted with slime. All this was indicative of an indifference on the part of the strange tenant which could only be accounted for on the ground that he was of an eccentric, even gloomy disposition.

"A man who can isolate himself as this man does, and display no interest in his dwelling, must be a strangely constituted being," I argued with myself. "Either he is a victim to some phase of madness or

he has come to regard the world with aversion."

As I felt it very desirable that I should have some personal knowledge of Vellacott, I resorted to a little stratagem to gain it. I rang the bell one day at the main door, and after considerable delay was confronted by the Mulatto woman whom Mrs. Staffler had referred to as Rinaldo. She was a dirty, slipshod, fierce-looking creature who would have served an artist excellently well as a model for a typical and traditional witch. It was easy to associate with her all the absurd stories one has heard of the power of witches to lure men to destruction, and to blight and slay cattle by a mere glance of the eye. One could imagine her moulding a waxen image in the likeness of an enemy, and sticking the image full of pins so that the enemy might gradually wither away. Most certainly the ignorant and the stupid would not have been slow to accredit her with weird and supernatural powers.

Brusquely and coarsely she demanded to know what my business was. She spoke with a pronounced accent and her command of English was far from perfect. I expressed a desire to see the master, but angrily she bade me depart, as the "master" was not to be seen. Nor should I have seen him probably, had it not so chanced that Vellacott was crossing the hall from one room to the other and heard me express regret that I could not have an interview with him. The woman said something to him rapidly in Portuguese, and he answered her in the same language, then said in English:

"Show the gentleman in, Anna."

And Anna, grumbling and muttering between her blackened stumps, piloted me into a small room, not ill furnished but looking sadly neglected, and reeking of damp. In a few minutes Mr. Vellacott joined me.

He wore a frayed dressing-gown, Turkish slippers, and a black skull cap. He was a shrivelled looking man of medium height, with a strangely sallow complexion, and small, intensely dark, intensely brilliant eyes. It was altogether a remarkable thing that such bright eyes should be associated with such a yellow complexion. His teeth were exceedingly good and very white; and though he was well advanced in years his face was without a wrinkle, while his hands were the hands of adolescence. It is well known that the hands are the first part of the body to show signs of age but this man had the hands of a youth of fourteen or fifteen. In fact, notwithstanding the yellow face he could easily have passed for a man of thirty or even younger, for his voice was strong, his gait steady, his figure straight. And yet there was something about all this that struck me as unnatural. His youthful appearance seemed to me to be the result of artificial means.

I apologized for my intrusion; said that the neglected look of the place had led me to infer it was for sale although I saw no board up, and being a stranger in the neighbourhood I was induced to make some inquiries.

He smiled in a strange way and his white teeth gleamed, while his extraordinary eyes shone with the brilliancy of an angry snake's. As I looked at him now I could well understand how he had been enabled to throw a spell over the weak-minded Beryl Staffler.

"No," he answered, "the property is not for sale. I confess it is neglected; it has become a wilderness; but the fact is I am a lonely sort of man. I have no kindred, and I become greatly absorbed in my favourite study, for which I have a passionate love."

"May I inquire what that is?"

"Oh, yes; it is chemistry; that is, the occult phases of chemistry which is the basis of all creation. We ourselves are mere chemical compounds which if understood aright would enable us to perform marvels. But the fact is, while your scientific men talk glibly about their knowledge of the chemical elements of the human body, they are singularly ignorant and can go no farther than to tell us that we have lime, phosphorus, soda, and various salts, etc., in our bodies. But that is knowledge that a child may acquire. It is merely A.B.C. I go infinitely deeper than that. I have devoted my attention to endeavouring to discover the true principle of life.

"And have you succeeded?" I asked with an ironical smile.

"Not quite," he replied, "but I have come near it. I have found out how to perpetuate youth. Pray don't laugh. Look at me. I am living evidence of the truth of what I say. I have by means of a marvellous discovery learnt the secret of staying the ravages of age."

"Does that mean," I asked, "that you know the art of prolonging life indefinitely?"

He was thoughtful. His eyes appeared to me to lose some of their brilliancy. He was like a man who was utterly absorbed in a profound introspective study. In a few moments he closed his eyes; placed the tip of his index finger on the furrow between the eyes and stood motionless and statue-like. Presently he recovered himself; his eyes flashed forth again, and gazing at me steadfastly he answered:

"No—I will not go quite so far as that. To preserve one's youth is, if I may so express it, a mere chemical trick; to prolong life indefinitely one must know the essence, the principle of life: and that hitherto has eluded the grasp of all searchers. It is

something, however, to know how to keep one's self young; and how to arrest the horrible process of decay."

"Can you arrest decay?"

"Yes. That is another secret I have wrested from the mysterious depths of science. I can give the dead a beauty they did not possess in life; and I can stay the effacing finger of corruption."

I could not suppress a smile as he thus spoke. It is true there was an absolutely startling earnestness in his manner, but it was the earnestness of fanaticism; the earnestness of the mystic.

I was anxious to prolong the conversation, for the man was more than ordinarily interesting, notwithstanding that I considered him to be—to a large extent—a charlatan; but he said abruptly:

"Well, you will excuse me. I must go. My laboratory demands my presence." Then, opening the door of the room, he called out: "Anna, Anna, conduct the gentleman to the hall."

I had only just time to express my thanks for the courtesy he had shown me when the hag-like Mulatto appeared. She was so hideously ugly, so old and parched that I was about to turn and ask him how it was he had not tried his wonderful discovery on her, but he had gone, and a door in the panelling that I had not before noticed was sliding back into its place again, and thus indicating his means of exit.

"Come" said the woman roughly; and as I had no excuse to linger longer I followed her, and passed out of the house to the moss-grown terrace.

The day was dying. The slanting rays of the sun illumined the landscape with an effulgence that brought out every detail, and imparted a beauty to even the most commonplace features; but somehow or other neither that house nor its jungle-like surroundings

seemed warmed or lighted by a single ray. It was the house of gloom, and seemed a fitting place for the abode of the strange man I had just left.

I lost no time in seeing Mrs. Staffler and acquainting her with my impression of Vellacott, and I strongly urged her to take her daughter away, and let her look no more upon the mysterious tenant of Monksbell. But the lady insisted that such a course would be useless. She said she knew her daughter's disposition too well to think that for an instant she would swerve from her resolution. To oppose her would result in misery and suffering, and she strongly urged her contention that it would be far better to learn all that could be learnt of Vellacott's past. If there was nothing against him, and eccentric though he was, she saw no reason why her daughter should not marry him; but if his career had been shameless and profligate that revelation would, no doubt, be sufficient inducement to influence her daughter in curing herself of her infatuation.

I allowed Mrs. Staffler's arguments to prevail; though for other reasons than she advanced I deemed it desirable that Vellacott's history should be known. The lady agreed with me that to attempt to learn it from his own lips would be as useless as looking for the philosopher's stone and so it was decided that I should arrange to depart as early as possible for Brazil, and acting on the slight information which he had thought proper to impart to her, endeavour to trace his life back to its earliest years. I left England in the autumn, my objective point being Rio Janeiro, where I arrived after a somewhat stormy passage. I lost no time in commencing my inquiries, and I ascertained that Tyler Vellacott, although known in Rio, where he had been looked upon as a half mad man, had lived for many years up the country at a place

called Ararquara, in the province of Sao Paulo where he owned an estate. So thither I wended my way; not easily, as anyone will readily understand who has ever travelled in the Brazils. I reached my destination after the endurance of much misery, and I found myself in a very wild and isolated part of the country. Ararquara seemed to me to be the most undesirable place to live in it would be possible to imagine.

In this place or its immediate neighbourhood Vellacott had resided for many years, and owned a coffee plantation on which he had employed upwards of four hundred slaves. As in Rio, he had been looked on by the people of Ararquara as eccentric to the verge of madness; and yet he had conducted his business in a very business-like way and was known to have made a fortune. He married the young widow of a neighbouring planter, and she had brought him considerable property. But it very soon became known that he and his wife led a most unhappy life. Their tastes, temperaments, and habits were totally different, and their quarrels were many and frequent. She left him on two or three different occasions and went to stay with friends in Rio, but after a time she always returned to him. At length she mysteriously disappeared, and when it became bruited about that nobody had seen her go away, and that her friends in Rio knew nothing of her whereabouts ugly rumours were spread. At last her friends became clamorous, and openly accused her husband of having made away with her. He was accordingly arrested, and every means were resorted to to get some trace of the missing woman, but without result. In due course—and the course of legal procedure in Brazil is painfully slow—Tyler Vellacott was put upon his trial, but as no evidence was forth coming he was ultimately discharged. Anna Rinaldo his servant, although she was threatened

with torture vowed that she knew nothing, but she declared that she had several times heard her mistress say that she would destroy herself. Other witnesses swore they had heard the unfortunate woman give utterance to the same threat. The question, however, that found no answer was, "Where is her body?" A dead person could not dispose of his own remains. It was suggested that she had gone forth into the vast forests that stretched to the north of the town and there been consumed by some of the fierce wild animals that swarm in Brazilian jungles. Anyone getting lost in the Jungle was never likely to be heard of again. Orchid hunters and others whose avocations took them to the dark depths of the forests sometimes disappeared as effectually as if the earth had opened and swallowed them. It was known that if a human being met with an accident in the forest, or was overcome with weakness or sudden illness so that he could not help himself, he would—supposing that he escaped the larger carnivora—be utterly devoured in a few hours by the fierce rodents, and in the course of two or three weeks his bones would be entirely covered over by the rank vegetation which grows with such marvellous rapidity.

Now, whether Mrs. Vellacott had met her end in this way or not the theory, as every Brazilian knew, was feasible enough, and in view of no other being suggested it was generally accepted, save by the woman's relatives, who threatened Vellacott with violence. He manifested no alarm, however, but proceeded to realize his property, and that done he took his departure from the country accompanied by his faithful servant Anna Rinaldo who was known to be passionately attached to him.

Having gone, all interest in him ceased, and the mystery of his wife's end seemed destined to remain

a mystery for ever. This in substance was the story I gathered; but in addition, as justifying the opinion that was expressed that he was eccentric if not somewhat off his mental balance, I was told that he often spent many hours of the night in his chemical laboratory which no other human being was allowed to enter except, perhaps, Anna, though there was no evidence that she did so. And he had been frequently heard to boast that he had made two wonderful discoveries. One was the means of arresting decomposition in all animal substances, preserving them in all their pristine freshness; the other the means of renewing youth. The first was regarded as a chemical possibility; the other as charlatanism, and strongly indicating that he was a crank. But it was admitted as a curious fact which went a long way towards supporting him in his statement, that he changed his own appearance from haggard age to, relatively speaking, blooming youth. Of course I should have treated this as the idle gossip of an ignorant and credulous people who have an ingrained belief in sorcery, witchcraft, and magical spells—I refer more particularly to the lower orders—had I not seen with my own eyes certain signs which lent colouring to the story. I freely confess that if I attached no great importance to it, I was not prepared to scout it altogether. At any rate, I looked upon Vellacott as a very remarkable man who presented the world in his own proper person with one of those startling human puzzles which are not easily solved. Perhaps he was a fool, madman, and knave combined; but he was neither so foolish nor so mad that he did not know what he was about. And yet it was clear that he thought not as the generality of men think, and he lived a life that might very properly be described as unnatural. My investigation in Brazil extended

over a period of three months; and I left the country by no means sorry to get away. For existence is carried on there under conditions which sorely try the average European. The climate saps his strength; night and day he is tortured by numberless insect pests, and whenever he moves from the centres of civilization he is menaced on all sides by venomous reptiles and ferocious beasts. In addition to all this he is irritated by the treachery, the filthy habits, and the incurable laziness of the people. Under the sway of almost any other people but the Portuguese Brazil would be one of the grandest and wealthiest countries in the world.

I merely give vent to these expressions as my personal opinion based upon a short experience, and I am open to be set right or corrected by anyone who is competent to speak with greater authority than I am.

My voyage home was marked by a succession of tremendous storms and a narrow escape from shipwreck, and when I stepped ashore at Southampton from the deck of the good ship that had brought us safely through many perils, it was with a sense of relief. The object of my journey had so far been gained that I was in a position to advise Mrs. Staffler that it would be undesirable to permit her daughter to unite her destiny with the strange tenant of Monksbell, Tyler Vellacott. After a day's rest I hurried off to Malmesbury expecting to find things *in statu quo*, but such was not the case. Mrs. Staffler was in a state bordering on distraction as well she might be, for three weeks previous her daughter had disappeared. Then it was found that Monksbell was shut up, and Vellacott and his strange servant had gone away. This permitted of but one inference, which was that Beryl had gone with them. Every effort

had been made to trace the fugitives but without avail, and poor Mrs. Staffler was stricken with inconsolable grief.

"As you have done so much," she exclaimed to me, with a passionate wail, "complete your services by discovering the whereabouts of my misguided daughter. I would sooner have followed her to her grave," she added, "than have to bear the shame and humiliation that afflict me now "

Of course I promised to do what I could, and it was very evident that from this point I should have to take a new departure: but as Beryl was of full age there was no legal power that could compel her to return to her mother's house. Of course if her whereabouts was discovered it came within the bounds of possibility that the moral persuasion of her unhappy mother might have an effect where everything else would fail, but I confess that the probability of such persuasion being successful seemed to me remote. It was only too obvious that the girl must have fallen completely under the extraordinary influence of Vellacott, and the odds were largely in favour of that influencing enduring; for his power was strong; she was weak. It appeared that she had gone to Bath on a visit to some friends. After being there four or five days she expressed a desire to return home, as she expected an old school-fellow to visit her. This, of course, prevented her friends having any suspicion. From the time that her friends saw her off by the train all trace of her was lost. On leaving Malmesbury she had taken a first-class return ticket, but the half from Bath to Malmesbury had never been given up. That was significant, and it was a most remarkable fact that in spite of the efforts that had been made to trace her, no information was forthcoming as to where she had alighted. If she had

returned to Malmesbury the half of the ticket could have been found, notwithstanding that several days elapsed before her mother knew she had left her friends, and the friends learned that she had not gone back to Malmesbury. It was discovered by her letters directed to Bath being re-addressed to her home.

My own inquiries left no room to doubt that she had travelled by the Malmesbury train on the day her friends saw her off. Now, she could not have travelled without a ticket, and I came to the conclusion at once that she had taken a ticket for some other place unknown to her friends. Acting on this, I caused minute inquiries to be made as to the tickets that were issued by that particular train on that particular day, and I found that three singles were issued for Malmesbury and two for Chippenham, and several for Swindon and other places. It is but a short rail journey from Bath to Malmesbury and Chippenham is within easy drive of the latter place. At it was winter time it would be dark when the train reached Chippenham, and it occurred to me that one of the two ticket holders for Chippenham was Miss Staffler. Of course I shall be asked what my reason was for this. Here it is. Vellacott and his servant were such conspicuous people that they certainly could not have left Malmesbury without its being known; but even if they had succeeded in doing so it was extremely likely owing to the wide publicity given to the case that information of them, from somewhere or other would have been forthcoming. Now, what was the logical deduction from this line of argument? To my mind it was that she had alighted at Chippenham been met by Vellacott and had walked to Monksbell, a distance of under ten miles, or she might have gone alone. It did not affect me that Monksbell was shut up and tradesmen

and others who called had gone away under the impression that no one was in the house. Vellacott kept an account at a local bank, and this account had not been drawn upon for some time. That fact possessed a certain significance which will be obvious.

It may be argued that though she did go to Monksbell, she and Vellacott and Rinaldo must have left again very soon. Not necessarily so, for as I have endeavoured to show if they had done that some information about them would in all probability have been obtained. Then assuming that they did not leave the house they were there still; and being there and being human they would have required provisions from outside sources, unless a large quantity had previously been laid in, and no evidence was forthcoming to justify that conclusion. But being there how did they live? My opinion was, they were not living at all, but *dead*.

This was a startling theory, but I worked it out in this way Vellacott was a strange man, full of extraordinary ideas, and half mad. Supposing that his influence had so far prevailed as to draw the girl to his gloomy abode, and when she reached there she suddenly realized her position and endeavoured to retreat—to escape. What was more likely—having regard to the man and the circumstances—than that he killed her? Or he might have been trying some of his cracked-brain experiments upon her, and accidentally extinguished her life. In which case fear and grief might have driven him to slay his servant and then himself. I was so far affected and swayed by this line of reasoning that I applied for and obtained an order to break into the premises. The application was kept secret, and near midnight one night, accompanied by a well-known J.P., three constables, and a London detective, I effected an entrance into

the premises. It was a dark, wild, fierce sort of night, such as is often experienced in England in early December. The wind blew freezingly and in squally gusts; screaming through the leafless trees, or moaning like a thing in pain, round the gloomy house. In the house itself a solemn silence reigned, save for the wind that wailed and sighed in the passages. There was an eeriness about the place that was impressive. In our own shadows thrown by the lights we carried, a nervous person might have fancied he saw ghosts or ghouls. From room to room we went. Nothing seemed to have been disturbed. In the dining-room the grey ashes of the last fire were on the cold hearth. The table was partly covered with a white cloth, on which were the remains of the last meal. A decanter half full of wine, some fruit that was a mass of putridity, the remnants of a leg of mutton at which the rats or mice had been gnawing, a closed silver box containing biscuits, a box with some cigars, and on a plate a cigar partly smoked. There was something positively uncanny in all this, and to some extent it certainly prepared me for what followed.

From the dining-room we went to the "Laboratory." A long, narrow room it was, with a goodly array of crucibles, retorts, syphons, bottles, and the hundred and one things that an experimental chemist would surround himself with. But there was *something* that arrested our attention more than these. Seated in a large chair, her head resting on a silken cushion was Beryl Staffler. Her fair hair was hanging loose about the cushion; her eyes were open and bright; her face ruddy with a glow of life as it seemed, and yet there was a dreadful waxiness about it; a polished opaqueness that caused it to resemble marble; and she was as rigid and hard as marble; as cold as ice;

motionless as a statue, for she was dead, and yet there was no sign of the effacing finger of death. It was a strange and impressive sight; but there was a stranger and more awful one still. In a crouching position at her feet, its head resting on her knees was what at first might have been taken for a dressed up, but dead and shrivelled, monkey. The face was brown like mahogany, the skin drawn tightly over the prominent bones, the lips were stretched apart revealing the white teeth, the eyes had dried up from the sockets, the hands were the hands of a mummy. A very little examination proved that figure to be all that remained of Vellacott. The few hairs about the cranium were white as driven snow, and the dead man had the appearance of having reached an extreme old age. What was the mystery? Had his wonderful youth-preserving elixir failed? And young as he seemed when I saw him in life had he really reached an age far beyond the allotted span?

Although he was shrivelled and fleshless the ordinary signs of decomposition were wanting. So far we had accounted for two of the actors in the extraordinary drama. Where was the third?—that is, Anna Rinaldo. Prosecuting our search we left no part of the house unvisited, but not a sign of the Mulatto could be found; and so, full of a wonderment that made us dumb we gave the place over to silence and death for the time being, and went forth into the night. The trees looked like solid blocks of shadows; rain fell in torrents and the howling wind smote it until it seemed to struggle in the fury of a great wrath; dashing itself against the foliage and the building with the hiss of a thousand serpents, and leaping up from the ground in boiling, misty wreaths. It was with a sense of positive relief we quitted the grounds

and heard the great gate swing on its rusty hinges between us and that house of mystery.

On the following day the investigation was continued and resulted in a further revelation. We had failed to notice on the previous night (and no wonder) a large glass shade covering a metal plate, that stood on a table in the laboratory. On the plate was a heap of greyish looking dust; and written on a parchment label attached to the knob of the bell-shaped glass by a piece of ribbon was the following:—

“This dust is all that remains of Anna Rinaldo, my faithful Mulatto servant. I reduced her body to ashes in six hours by a chemical process, the secret of which will die with me. TYLER VELLACOTT.”

So much and no more did the strange being tell. All the rest could only be guessed at. Was it not probable, however, that he had reduced his wife in Brazil to a handful of ashes, and scattered them to the winds? But how did Rinaldo die? Did her master kill her and Beryl Staffer? If so, why? Was it not very probable that Beryl's death was brought about by accident, and that being so he too resolved to die, though first of all he determined that he would prove to the world that he had made two great discoveries. He could prevent decomposition, and reduce a human body to ashes without the aid of fire. When he came to die himself, the effects of his youth preserving elixir passing away disclosed that he was a weakened shrivelled old man, who had only worn a mask of youth, which falling off revealed a sight that made one shrink with horror. How he slew himself; how he killed Beryl, if he did kill her, which I doubt; how he influenced her to join him, and for what purpose could never be determined. He was a human problem that could not be fully solved,

and his marvellous story serves to give point to the Shakespearian dictum that:

“There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.”

Poor Mrs. Staffler did not long survive the shock that the revelation caused her. Her daughter's remains were consigned to the family tomb in the picturesque grave garden of a little country church. Vellacott's body was placed in a nameless grave in unconsecrated ground, while Rinaldo's ashes were sealed in a vase that is now in the possession of a well-known scientific man.

With the passing of the strange tenant the blight that had so long rested on Monksbell came back like a curse. People shunned the place, for they said foul things haunted it, and blood-curdling sights and sounds were to be seen and heard by him who had the hardihood to venture near after dark. The jungly growth of trees, shrubs and weeds choked up the paths in time, and hid the house from view. Owls hooted from the chimney stacks, bats flitted in and out through the broken windows, the ravens found undisturbed shelter, until years had elapsed; then the hand of improvement swept the whole place away and Monksbell is known no more save as a tale that is told.

THE VULTURE-FACE MAN.

It was a winter night. London was wrapped in, or more correctly speaking permeated, saturated, sodden, with a thick, dense, choking, palpable yellow fog. Traffic was almost entirely suspended. A horrible silence prevailed. The gloom of death seemed to have settled upon the great city. The gas-lamps were powerless to penetrate the murk atmosphere. Such pedestrians as were out looked like spectres, as they struggled on their weary way, with heads bowed, faces muffled. The shopkeepers, despairing of doing any more business that day had put up their shutters, for they knew that evil human things were abroad and neither property nor life was safe. The theatres were empty; even the artistes of the music-halls sang and buffooned to empty benches. Nothing stirred upon the river, and the work of the railways was carried on under the utmost difficulty. Some of the trains laden with city men bound for the suburbs were delayed on the way two and three hours. It was indeed a terrible night, and many sick and delicate people died from breathing the poisoned and mephitic atmosphere; while the ill-clad and poverty stricken wretches of the alleys and slums suffered agony.

In strange and striking contrast to all this was the "Blue Room" of the newly erected National Hotel. This splendid and palatial house had been

erected by a limited company, and that night being the first anniversary of the opening, the Directors had invited the shareholders to a grand ball. Of course it was not foreseen when the invitations were sent out that on the ball night the modern Babylon would be wrapped in an inky pall of choking fog. Many who were to have been present from distant parts of London were unable to reach the hotel at all, and had to bear with their disappointment as best they could. People who lived in the country, or at any rate some of them, had taken up their residence in the house two or three days before, so that they were not prevented by the atmospheric conditions from displaying their gorgeous dresses and sparkling jewels.

The "Blue Room" of the National Hotel was said to be one of the finest rooms of the kind in London, outside of Buckingham Palace and one or two of the historic mansions. The decorations were of a peculiarly chaste character: the walls being panelled with blue, with white and gold bordering. As for the ceiling, artists and critics had come from all parts of the country to gaze upon it, for it was the work of a famous Italian artist whose name was known throughout the civilized world.

Terrible as the gloom and fog were outside, the ball-room was now a scene of brilliancy and beauty. A crack military band discoursed sweet music: and the gorgeously dressed dancers threaded their way through the mazy quadrille, or whirled round in the giddy waltz, all unmindful of the horrors that prevailed outside the well-warmed and well-lighted building, and the suffering and the misery of the houseless and the hungry. By common consent it was admitted by all that the belle of the room was a young lady who was on the right side of thirty. Firstly she was

possessed of beauty of no common order. She had an exquisitely moulded arm, and a face that suggested all the delicate tracing of a cameo. Her neck, shoulders, and bosom were without a fault, and her well-poised head was surmounted by a wealth of splendid auburn hair in which burned and flashed a single diamond star. Round her swan-like neck was a diamond necklet of the purest gems, while diamonds sparkled on her wrists. Not only was she a perfect dancer, but she carried herself with a dignity and grace that attracted the attention of everyone. Her dress too, was in keeping with her beauty. It was pure cream-coloured satin, trimmed with bullion fringe. This lady who seemed to be under the care of an elderly chaperon, was apparently the gayest of the gay in that festive scene. Her laughter was like music itself, and when her red lips were parted they disclosed the most perfectly even and white teeth.

As may be supposed, she was much sought after by the other sex as a partner in the dance; but she did not confer her favours indiscriminately. Indeed, it was a matter of remark that her envied favourites were few. Had some wandering angel from another sphere entered the room that night, and requested to be shown the incarnation of the highest human happiness, the lady in the gold and satin dress would surely have been presented to him as typifying earthly contentment *in excelsis*. On her fair brow no care seemed to rest; in her laughter there was no trace of sorrow, while health and wealth would appear to have been hers in abundance. She was a star in that scene of brilliancy; and the flowers, the music, the lights, the flashing jewels served but to enhance her own beauty, so to speak, for beauty should have a beautiful setting, whether it be embodied in a picture

or a landscape, a woman or a jewel. Truly that ball-room was a scene of dazzling radiance, but outside the gloom of eternal night seemed to have settled on the mighty city with its wonderful secrets; its inscrutable mysteries, its folly and foibles, its sin and misery.

The hours waned. The theatres and music-halls had long since closed their doors, and the tired mummers had managed somehow or other to reach their houses. The houseless waifs and the starving gutter rats had slunk away into any hole or corner that would afford them some pretence of shelter from the cold; and the *habitues* of the gin palaces and public-houses with their meretricious attractions and fatal fascinations, had disappeared, for darkness and silence reigned where erstwhile there had been uproar and light. Shivering policemen stood at the street corners or wearily patrolled their beats; but they could see nothing, for the fog was impenetrable. Four o'clock rang out solemnly and slowly from the great bell of Westminster tower, but the brazen noises were strangely muffled and subdued by the heavy, dense atmosphere.

At the National Hotel, the last bars of music had been played, the last dance had been danced, the last dancer had gone, the lights were extinguished, save such as were necessary to enable the servants to perform their work of clearing the room; and to the human atoms who had made up that little world of movement, light and joy the night with its splendour and feast was but a memory.

The scene shifts. It is nearly high noon of the day following. The fog has lifted considerably, so that traffic can be resumed; but there is still a heavy damp mist, so cold and saturating that it seems to penetrate to one's very marrow. Suddenly throughout the National Hotel runs a thrill of horror; there has

been a tragedy, and the belle of the ball room—the Beauty of the gold and satin dress—lies on her bed with a ghastly pallor on her face, and her delicate limbs frozen with the coldness of death. Her friend and companion, a Mrs. Arkwright, had occupied an adjoining room, that communicated with her friend's room by a door which had been partially open all night. She had risen soon after eleven, and gone to her friend to enquire if she was ready to partake of some tea. But a horrible sight met her gaze and almost paralyzed her with fear. Beauty was in the throes of death, her nightdress and bedclothes were crimson with her lifeblood which had flowed from a gaping wound in her bosom. She was still conscious, and looked pitiably at her friend, who, going to the bedside, exclaimed frantically:

“Florence! what does this mean?”

The dying woman's lips moved, and as Mrs. Arkwright inclined her head so that she might the better hear anything that was said, she caught these words, gasped out in broken accents and with difficulty:

“The—the—Vulture-face man.”

The dying woman spoke no more; a fearful spasm shook her; she clutched at the air, while Mrs. Arkwright tugged violently at the bell, then flung wide the door, and rushing on the landing *en deshabelle* screamed shrilly and long. In a very few moments servants and visitors had crowded round. She could only point dumbly to the room before she sank down in a dead faint, and when people pressed eagerly through the open doorway it was to find that Florence had ceased to breathe. While some attended to Mrs. Arkwright, others rushed for medical aid, which was soon forthcoming; but nothing human could restore the dead to life again. A tragedy had been enacted, and now it became necessary to determine if Beauty

had slain herself, if Mrs. Arkwright had slain her, or if she had been killed by someone else. I was called upon the scene, and at once commenced an investigation. It was soon made manifest that Mrs. Arkwright was innocent of any participation in her friend's death; and the medical evidence left no doubt that Beauty could not have taken her own life. A small stiletto had been driven with great force into the breast, piercing the right lung, but the wound indicated that she could not have done it with her own hands. The stiletto with the point broken off—the point being left in the wound—was found on the floor. It had a mother-of-pearl handle which was drenched with blood.

Of course a revelation had to be made. When Mrs. Arkwright recovered somewhat from the dreadful shock she had sustained, she said she was a widow, and resided in the neighbourhood of Nottingham, where her friend also resided. The dead woman's name was Florence Maude Slark. She was the wife of Lieutenant-General Slark, a retired officer who had seen much service. He was twice the age of his wife and there had been much unhappiness between them, as their tastes and ideas were so totally dissimilar. She had married him for his position and money.

So much to begin with was brought to light, but there was much more to be known. For the time being it was all important that every effort should be made to trace the murderer. The chamber in which the dead body lay was a large, handsomely furnished room on the first floor. It was lighted by two French windows that communicated with a narrow balcony protected by a massive stone balustrade overlooking the main street. To this balustrade was attached by means of hooks, a strong, knotted, silken cord which descended to within about six feet of the pave-

ment. By this cord the murderer had escaped, for there were marks of bloody fingers on the stone work, and the cord itself was stained with blood. There is no doubt he intended to take the cord with him, but having miscalculated the distance somewhat, he found that he could not jerk the hooks free of the balustrade when he reached the pavement; and he had no alternative but to leave the evidence of his escape behind him. So he fled forth into the fog and the gloom, and the great city swallowed him up.

Now as to a clue. Mrs. Arkwright attached no importance to her dying friend's words: "The vulture-face man" but I did. The "vulture face" might have been the result of a mind horrified with a fear of death. But I considered it had direct reference to someone the murdered woman had been acquainted with and in whose features she traced some fancied resemblance to a vulture. Given that my theory was correct, I had to search the world for a man with a "vulture face" And when I had found him I should have the murderer of the beautiful Mrs. Slark.

In beginning my quest it was absolutely necessary that I should learn the history of the dead woman in its entirety, for in that history some page would probably afford valuable hints that would help one to unravel the mystery.

Florence was the only child of her parents. Her father had served the Hon. East India Company long and well. He had married the daughter of a London merchant who was supposed to be wealthy, but dying it was found that his affairs were so involved that he had little or nothing to leave.

Florence's father, however, was not poor, but his life went out when his child was barely seven. He was on his way home from India as an invalid, but died on the voyage. Florence had a weak and in-

dulgent mother who spoilt her so that she became a self-willed, wayward, and headstrong girl. She was not fourteen when her mother died, and the girl was then placed in the care of a guardian. He appears to have been an austere, puritanical Scotchman to whom the girl took an intense dislike. She was renowned for her beauty and could have had lovers by the score, but her guardian exercised such a keen vigilance that she had no chance of open flirtation; though there was very strong reason to suspect that she had secret love adventures.

As soon as ever she came of age she rushed into matrimony. She was then said to be one of the most beautiful girls that human eyes could have looked upon. Save on the hypothesis that she married solely for money—she had very small means of her own—it is difficult to understand why she should have been in such haste to wed. Her husband, Lieut.-Gen. Slark was a grizzled warrior who had been battered and broken during a long course of active soldiering. He succeeded to a large and valuable estate in Nottinghamshire on the borders of the famed forest of Sherwood. It was soon made manifest that his young and beautiful wife was not at all disposed to be humdrum or submissive, and quarrels between her and her greybeard husband were frequent. She married in haste, she repented at leisure; and she resolutely refused to be controlled by her lawful lord and master, while he for the sake of peace and quietness allowed her much more liberty than was either judicious or good for her.

Amongst the acquaintances she formed was a Mrs. Arkwright, whose husband had made money in the wholesale boot and shoe trade. Dying, he left his childless widow, who was still young and possessed of considerable attractions, well off. One must have

a pretty considerable knowledge of human nature to determine what there was in common between the two ladies. Mrs. Arkwright was rather a vulgar woman, and by no means well educated. Her personal attractions could not be mentioned in the same breath as those of her much younger companion. But Mrs. Slark was glad to take ostensible shelter under her wing; and Mrs. Arkwright was proud to be able to speak of Lieut.-Gen. Slark's wife as her friend. The widow had been a source of much unpleasantness between the General and his wife. He did not like her. He had forbidden her to associate with his wife or come to his house. The latter mandate she obeyed, the former Mrs. Slark herself ignored. She was fascinated with the widow, and the widow had great power over her.

Mrs. Arkwright was a shareholder in the National Hotel Co. Ltd., hence it was she had received an invitation to the ball. She had pressed her friend to join her, and Mrs. Slark had yielded readily, but knowing that she would never be able to obtain her husband's consent she told him that she was going to London to do some shopping and would stay with an aunt for a few days. He would have insisted on accompanying her had it not been that he was helpless with an attack of acute gout. Nor could he alter her resolve or control her movements, so he had to submit because he had no other alternative. It was Hobson's choice. He was in entire ignorance that she was going to London with Mrs. Arkwright or that she intended to be present at the ball. Mrs. Arkwright engaged the rooms at the hotel; she had planned that she and her friend would return to their respective homes on the afternoon following the ball. But she was too frivolous and shallow-pated to understand that she was running a tremendous risk and

playing with fate when she tacitly counselled poor Mrs. Slark to so shamefully deceive her husband.

Such in outline was the history of Mrs. Slark. No doubt it is the history of thousands of other women, and therefore may be said to be commonplace. Yet the history of human beings must ever repeat itself; it can vary only in degree. But in the dead woman's case were deeper depths and finer shades of shadow to be explored, for they concealed the clue to the vulture-face man, and I was resolved to get hold of that clue.

The crime had been deliberately planned, and revenge was the motive. Nothing had been stolen from the lady's room. All her valuable diamonds and other jewels were lying intact on the dressing-table, where she had placed them on retiring. Had robbery been the motive the criminal would never have left the diamonds, which he could so easily have carried off. As regards the deliberate planning of the deed, the fact of the murderer having so ingeniously provided means of escape proved that. Then again it was pretty evident that he had concealed himself in the room. Mrs. Arkwright testified that when she and her companion went up to their rooms it was a quarter to three. They were both exceedingly tired and proceeded at once to undress themselves. By the time they had finished this operation and arranged their hair for the night their watches had told off the fourth hour of the morning. Both the bedroom doors were locked and bolted, and Mrs. Arkwright declared that notwithstanding her excitement when she discovered the crime, she remembered perfectly having to draw the bolt of the door before she could get on the landing. The deduction therefore was that the criminal was concealed in the room, and there was no place where he could have concealed himself save under the bed,

which was a heavy iron one with valances all round the lower part of it. That he had so concealed himself seemed absolutely certain, but how long he had remained concealed no human being could determine by any process of ordinary reasoning. It was only a little less difficult to say with any pretension to accuracy at what hour the fatal blow was struck. It was about half past eleven in the forenoon when Mrs. Arkwright discovered her friend *in extremis*, but the medical opinion was that the poor woman had been bleeding to death for some hours. The fatal wound was of such a nature that from the very first it would render her helpless. It was probable that she might have called out and have groaned, but Mrs. Arkwright slept so soundly that she failed to hear her.

The next step in logical sequence was to determine so far as it was possible to do, if any man had been present in the house, or at the ball whom Mrs. Slark had previously met. In this matter there was nothing but Mrs. Arkwright's evidence to go upon, though she expressed a very positive opinion that if her friend had seen any man at the ball with whom she was acquainted she would hardly have kept the matter secret. And yet when I put this point-blank question to the widow—"Did your friend entrust you with all her secrets?" she answered with an emphatic "Oh dear no. She was singularly reticent considering how familiar we were." After a thorough analysis, however, of all the incidents, and a searching examination of the probabilities and improbabilities I came to the conclusion in my own mind that the man had ascertained by some means that Mrs. Slark was going to be present at the ball; and taking advantage of the relative confusion he had managed to gain ingress to the hotel without being noticed; and had at once proceeded to her room and concealed himself there,

waiting for his prey; but she had been all unconscious of his presence in the house.

It may readily be imagined that his wife's terrible and tragic death proved a crushing blow to Lieut.-Gen. Slark. I found him a true gentleman of the old school; chivalrous, courteous, high minded, and full of generous feeling towards all men. He displayed a natural reluctance to breathe a syllable against his wife, and it was only by diplomatic and judicious questioning that I induced him to give me the following particulars.

He had known his wife for some time before he married her; and though he had conceived a great liking for her, he did not mention a word of marriage until she was of full age. Then she seemed to "jump at him," but he soon found he had made a grave mistake. She was thoughtless, giddy, and young, and accepted him without fully considering the matter. He was old and staid, and not suited for a woman of her temperament. She seemed to think that she had an absolute and perfect right to do as she liked and was unwilling to recognise, even in an infinitesimal degree, wifely thralldom. Whenever the General ventured, no matter in how mild a way, to remonstrate with her she would become exceedingly angry, and use galling and harsh expressions to him.

"I am sorry to have to confess it," added the General, "but it was sadly true that she bore me no love. I allowed her as much freedom as I could, compatible with propriety; but I set my face strongly against her associating with Mrs. Arkwright, who was not a fitting companion in any way for my poor wife."

Herein the General showed that his judgment and discrimination were sound. Mrs Arkwright was a very weak, very silly, and an indifferent sort of woman. By "an indifferent sort of woman," I

mean that she was frivolous, lacking a proper sense of self respect, and wholly incapable of viewing anything from a really serious standpoint. She was content to fritter her life away, and her regard for her good name was not what it ought to have been. There is no doubt that she had exercised a good deal of influence over Mrs. Slark, though perhaps Mrs. Slark was willing enough to be influenced. But with all my probing and all my searching investigation I failed to get a scrap of information likely to serve me in my search for the "Vulture-face man."

I have already remarked that Mrs. Arkwright attached no importance to the words. She regarded the expression of her dying friend as due to the delirium of impending death. But not so I. They had a very distinct significance for me. I ascertained that Mrs. Slark was in the habit of keeping a subdued gas-light burning all night. She had a strange nervous dread of being in the dark. Now, after she had been stabbed she no doubt caught sight of her slayer, and recognised him; though later, when her friend came to her she was only able to whisper "*The vulture-face man.*" I lay particular stress on the fact that she used the definite article, and that it seemed clearly to indicate that it was somebody she knew, and whom, owing to certain peculiarities of feature, some suggestiveness of configuration, she had been in the habit of thinking or referring to as a "vulture-face man."

I confess that it was a very knotty problem, and yet I did not despair of finding the solution. Of course I secured the cord with which the fellow had lowered himself from the balcony, and also the dagger or stiletto used for the perpetration of the horrible crime. I have stated that the cord was made of silk. This in itself was a remarkable incident, the

importance of which could not be overlooked. The silk of which it was composed was a coarse-fibred material peculiar to some parts of India, where it is used in the manufacture of shawls and other fabrics of a coarse texture. It possesses great tenacity, and twisted together in strands it makes an exceedingly light, flexible, and yet powerful rope. The man who had used the cord as a means of escaping from the hotel, had no doubt carried it wrapped round his body which as I put to the test could easily be done without attracting attention by its bulk. Another significant fact was that the weapon used for the commission of the murder was also Indian. It was a weapon such as one frequently sees on sale in the Bazaars of Delhi, Meerut and other parts of Upper India. The blades of these weapons being of native manufacture lack the fineness and temper peculiar to European steel, and hence the reason, no doubt, that the vulture-face man's stiletto broke off in the wound he had made in letting out the life of his victim.

I was now certain that the murder had not been committed by a native of England; the planning of it, its carrying out, and the patience, cold-bloodedness, and remarkable cunning displayed stamped it in my mind as a crime of a foreign order. But of what order? it will be asked. And to that I answer—Indian. It smacked of some of the strange tragedies that occur in our Eastern possessions, and are not infrequent in connection with the Zenanas. By that I mean that it is jealousy that prompts. The man who did the deed must have been concealed in the room some time, as I have already pointed out. The thick fog and the confusion in the hotel due to the ball favoured his project. He had tracked his victim, waited for her with the patience of a wild animal

waiting for its prey, and then slew her out of revenge or jealousy. Now, who was likely to cherish feelings of revenge or jealousy against a beautiful woman such as she was, except a flouted, scorned, disappointed lover? "A woman scorned" it has been said by some one, is more dangerous than a tigress robbed of her cubs, and my experience is that there are times when a scorned *man* is not less fierce.

My deduction was, therefore, that Mrs. Slark's murderer was a bitterly disappointed admirer, and that he was a native of India. That admitted, and the *Vulture-face* began to lose some of its mystification as I shall proceed to explain. But first let me say that I began to make careful enquiries as to whether a black man or a very dark-complexioned one had been noticed by anyone in the hotel. These enquiries elicited the fact that a nurse in the service of a lady staying in the house, was going along the long corridor in which her mistress's room was situated, when suddenly like a spectre, a dark man appeared before her, and so startled her that she nearly screamed out. The corridor being very long and filled with fog that almost obscured the gas-lights accounted for her not seeing the man until she was close to him. He uttered no sound but moved away from her at once, and beyond that he was black or very dark she could not describe him, nor could she tell where he went to. Such an impression did the incident make upon her mind that when she reached her mistress's room she fainted, and on reviving she declared that she had seen the spectre of a black man and she was sure it presaged evil. Of course no serious importance was attached to her statement, beyond that it was considered that she was suffering from some hallucination due to a bad state of health. She had been complaining for a considerable time.

From the place where she saw the man in the corridor to the door of the room that had been occupied by Mrs. Slark would be about fifteen yards. This information, as will be seen, was another important link, and tended greatly to strengthen my theory, for I did not for a moment think that it was a hallucination. What this woman had seen was a reality. That is, she had met a dark-skinned man in the passage; and that dark-skinned man was on the track of his victim whom he subsequently slew. There was another point to be determined. How did the man find out the room occupied by Mrs. Slark? In answer to this it seemed to me that he must have watched her movements from the time she arrived. She had been in London three days before her death. It was bad weather during all the time, and there had been many strangers passing in and out of the hotel, while preparations for the ball were in progress, as the employment of numerous workmen was necessary. Unusual chances were thus offered to the criminal to get the desired information. But there was another way by which he might have got it. Mrs. Slark and her friend the widow had done a great deal of shopping, and the things they had purchased were sent to the hotel by various tradesmen. In sending parcels to guests staying at an hotel it is customary to put the number of the guest's room on the parcel. It was possible—probable, in fact—that Mrs. Slark's destroyer had followed the ladies about, had seen the shops they went to and so had been enabled by that means to learn what he was anxious to know.

This argument led me to another consideration. Did the murderer come prepared with the silken cord by which he effected his escape, or did he provide himself with it after he had ascertained the position

of the room she occupied? I had no hesitation in answering the latter part of the question in the affirmative. He found out the room, he noted the balcony, he judged the distance from the balcony to the ground, and had then bought the cord and had been out in his calculation of the distance by a few feet, and had thus been compelled to leave his rope behind him. Had he got it away the mystery would have been increased manifold, as there would have been no indication as to how the assassin escaped.

Where did he get the cord from?

It was not easily procurable. There was one house I was acquainted with in London where they dealt almost exclusively in Indian goods. From enquiries I learnt that they had made such cord up for bell ropes in drawing-rooms and other rooms of swell West-end houses. But there was more than this brought to light. Two days before the crime they sold several yards of such cord to a man wearing European clothes including a top hat, but who seemed to be a Mulatto or a Parsee. He was not dark enough for a Hindoo or a Mohammedan. He did not state what he wanted the cord for, nor was he asked. By measurement I found that the cord attached to the balcony of the hotel corresponded exactly with that sold to the "Mulatto" or "Parsee."

Putting aside the very remote possibility of a coincidence there could not be the slightest ground for doubting that the dusky man who purchased the cord was the same man who slew poor, frail, and beautiful Mrs. Slark; and he was the vulture-face man of her dying vision. And now I came to the *crux* of the whole problem. It is well known to physiognomists that a person by association may acquire some particular look or expression. In a work on physiognomy published at the beginning of the present century, the

case is recorded of a man who for thirty odd years had been the keeper of the monkeys in a Zoological collection in Germany, and owing to his being constantly associated with these animals, he had come to bear a remarkable resemblance to a monkey, and had even acquired some of their habits. Now the man who I had strong reason to believe had murdered Mrs. Slark was a dark-skinned man, a Mulatto or Parsee. I inclined to the Parsee, and for this reason—the Parsees belong to India. In India vultures swarm, and in order to account for the vulture face it was necessary to associate the man with vultures. How could this be done? Long I pondered over the problem, and I endured a great mental struggle before I got a theory. But it came to me at last, and this was it.

In Bombay are the well known and ghastly Towers of Silence. As it may be possible that some of my readers may not have heard of these strange depositories of the dead, I may be permitted to explain that the Parsees do not bury their dead, but expose them on gratings on the summits of towers where they are devoured by the vultures. When a Parsee dies he is borne by his relatives to the dismal gates of these extraordinary charnel houses, but save the Keepers of the Towers and the Dead, no one or nothing passes the portals of mystery. When the corpse has been brought to the gateway the relatives take their last and farewell look of it, then the grim keepers receive it and bear it inside, and the gate closes for ever on the mortal remains.

The keepers then strip the remains off every atom of clothing, and carry them up the many flights of stone stairs to the gratings, where hundreds of fierce and hungry vultures are waiting eagerly for the hideous and revolting feast which begins immediately the body is left.

The men who perform the solemn and awful duties of corpse-bearers to the filthy scavenger birds, are grim, silent, and melancholy-looking beings; and some of them, more impressionable than others, acquire a look, which with the assistance of a little imagination, may be described as a vulture-like expression. Was it possible, I asked myself, that such a man could have forsaken his strange calling, and have come to England and met the lady who fascinated him, but who, shrinking from him in horror, fell a prey to his savage fury? This question was full of suggestiveness, and it induced me to seek another interview with Lieut.-General Slark, to ascertain if his wife had ever been in India.

"Oh, yes," was the answer, "we left England immediately after our marriage and went to the East, where we remained nine months. Four months of the time were passed in Bombay where I had and still have relatives."

After this information I felt that the tangled skein was being gradually unravelled, and that the theory I had built up was likely to prove correct. That theory might be summarised thus:

First—the murderer was a dark-skinned man!

Second—The dark-skinned man was a Parsee!

Third—The Parsee was a native of Bombay!

Fourth—The Parsee had possibly—probably—seen Mrs. Slark in Bombay, and had become dazzled by her radiant beauty.

Fifth—Possibly his calling was that of a "corpse prepare" in the Towers of Silence.

Sixth—He followed her to England. He had dogged her footsteps. He had haunted her. But realizing the utter hopelessness of his passion he had resolved on killing her, and had carried out his resolve.

All this may seem highly fantastic to him who

reads, but to me it was probable enough because it was *human enough*. Strange men have done strange deeds before now, that could not be gauged or understood by any ordinary process of commonplace reasoning. The slaying of Mrs. Slark was a strange deed. It had in it all the elements of a wild, a nightmare romance; and I was prepared to find its cause in a maddening and hopeless passion; and its author in some person whose life had been a wild, romantic dream, and whose surroundings and associations had been totally different to most men's. Nor was it in the common haunts that I expected to run down the assassin, if ever I did run him down. Thus it was that my reasoning led me to construct the theory I have set forth.

Many weeks passed and the dark crime was still shrouded in the mystery in which it had first been presented to the public gaze. Rumours and statements there were, more or less, every day, almost every hour of every day; but nobody was able to tear the veil of mystery away; nobody could put his hand on the murderer. From the moment that he dropped from his silken cord on to the pavement and fled away into the fog of the gloomy winter's morning, all trace of him ceased. He had disappeared as effectually as if the solid earth had opened and swallowed him.

If during this period I remained silent, I did not remain inactive. I sought for him in possible and impossible places. I haunted the docks and the neighbourhood of the docks; and the slums, alleys, and dens of the East-end of the great Babylon, searching eagerly for some traces of him I sought. Until at last there grew upon me an irresistible conviction that he had shaken the dust of London from his feet and had gone—whither?

To this question the process of reasoning which I had allowed to guide me so far would not have been consistent had it failed to furnish the answer. And what could that answer be but "To the East, from whence he came"?

Though he bore the brand of Cain, though like the Wandering Jew he was accursed, what more likely than that in the torture of his guilty conscience he should be driven back to his weird calling beneath the burning skies of his native land, whence he had been lured by the radiance of a beauty which was to him but a phantasmagoria that begot madness?

Until I had proved my theory true or false I could not cease my quest, and so one wild wet night I found myself steaming down the British Channel bound for Alexandria *en route* to India. The dark sea was lashed by the turbulence of a mighty wrath; and the flying spume drenched the vessel that tussled nobly with the giant wind, and the giant sea, and the rain sobbed in sad and mournful cadence, until verily it seemed as if the earth was filled with the moan of wrong, the cry of pain, and the shriek of evil! But in a few days we were beneath brighter skies, and in the balmy breezes there was a promise of hope, and a voice that told how fair and beautiful was the world and all things in it, save man—the greatest of God's creations and yet *he* alone was evil.

Across the burning sands of the desert, by sweltering Aden, through the torrid Red Sea I held my way until I stood in the picturesque and grandly situated city of Bombay, the sun-smitten city washed with an ocean of gold and framed with a setting of palms.

Let it not be supposed that I had gone to Bombay without some definite plan. My object was to put my theory to the practical test, and this is how I

did it. I at once made enquiries in the proper quarters if any one of the attendants of the Towers of Silence had been missing, and was informed that a man who had been for many years engaged there suddenly disappeared some time previously and no one knew whither he had gone. Recently, however, he had returned as mysteriously as he went, and his only explanation was that he had had a vision; he had been lured by a phantom. It was a vision of an angel he thought, and he believed it would lead him to Heaven. Instead it had lured him to the brink of hell, into which he had gazed with unutterable horror. It was noted since his return he was a prey to a settled gloom, a brooding melancholy; and so no doubt was entertained that his mind had become unhinged by the sad duties of his occupation, and he had been put under restraint by his friends. My next step was to obtain an interview with this man, and after some difficulty I succeeded in doing so. The instant I set my eyes upon him I understood how it was Mrs. Slark had referred to him as a "vulture-face man", for there was no longer any doubt that the man I had so long sought I had found. He had sharp aquiline features, a hooked nose, a peculiar drawn up formation of mouth, while his eyes were small, beady, restless, and full of fire. And more than all he had a truly remarkable way of moving his head from side to side, and following objects about with his fierce eyes, after the manner of a bird of prey. I had been previously informed that he spoke English perfectly, and I thus addressed him: "You have been away."

His eyes glittered as he fixed them on me, and he held his hands slightly upraised, with the long lithe fingers all stretched out like a vulture's talons when it swoops to seize. But he made no answer.

"You have been to England," I continued.

He breathed hard, his nostrils were compressed, his lips slightly apart. "You were in London," I went on, "and there you shed the blood of a fellow being, of a beautiful woman who had never injured you."

He threw his hands up above his head; the fingers still outstretched; and he uttered an awful shriek that will haunt me to my dying day.

"She was a fiend," he hissed; "she lured me to destruction."

Then with a sob he pitched forward on to his face and lay motionless.

I was glad to get away, and I lost no time in seeking advice as to the course to be pursued under such extraordinary circumstances. But the next morning a report came that he was dead. He was found on the steps leading up to the Towers of Silence, and his dead claw-like fingers, encircled, with the grip of a vice, the neck of a cobra, which was also dead. The snake had bitten the man in the throat over the jugular vein, and it was supposed that having effected his escape from the restraint imposed upon him, he had procured a cobra and allowed it to bite him, and in his frenzy or dying agony, he had retained his hold of the venomous reptile, and his grasp tightened as death approached, so that the life of the reptile went out with that of the man.

Such was the sequel to the strange and thrilling story of crime and madness, and the man's end was in keeping with his life and his deed. The Gods had smitten him, and human vengeance was forestalled.

From subsequent enquiries I made, it became evident that he escaped from England immediately after the crime, and reached France. Then making his way to Marseilles he obtained a passage on board of a P & O steamer bound for the East, and it was remembered

by those connected with the vessel that during the whole time he was on board he scarcely ever left his cabin, such food as he partook of being carried to him by a steward.

The dramatic fitness of his end cannot be gainsaid, and when the rites of his faith had been performed, his remains were exposed on the summit of the gloomy tower, and in a few hours not a trace was left of the Vulture-Face Man.

A LONG TRAIL.

DURING a not altogether uneventful career which has embraced experiences of men and things in all four quarters of the globe, I have often been struck by the strong resemblance the lives of some people bear to those of the characters created by the art of the fiction writer. This is, perhaps, but another way of giving expression to the well-worn axiom that truth is stranger than fiction. Indeed, it goes without saying, that he who would write romance must study real life, for that is the only school where he can find the types on which to mould the figures of his imagination. In other words no one can imagine anything that has not really happened, so long as he confines his flights of imagination to this terrestrial sphere and not to things human. In writing these stories I have never lost sight of the fact that one of the leading functions of a writer is to interest his writers; therefore I have endeavoured to deal only with such cases as have seemed to me to possess the elements of interest in a marked degree. I have tried in my humble way to bring out prominently the picturesque side to the exclusion of the vulgar. In the story I am about to tell the points I have urged in the foregoing lines are clearly set forth. It is a story of human wickedness, vulgar enough if separated from its picturesque elements, but by retaining these

it is invested with an interest that otherwise would be lacking. To follow a man across the whole of the North American continent before the completion of the road which now enables you to journey from Ocean to Ocean in something like six days and nights, can scarcely be regarded as a commonplace incident. But even if it were the grand and sublime scenery through which the trail led me, and the adventures sometimes exciting enough, inseparable from such a journey, cannot by any means be looked upon as commonplace.

It was towards the end of the winter of 1872 that this little drama opens. It had been a very severe winter, and sickness and death had laid low a good many distinguished people in various walks of life. Amongst those who had been seized with a fatal malady, consequent on the severity of the weather, was an aged gentleman whom I will designate as Mr. Stansfield Wimple.

This gentleman's career had in many ways been distinguished and conspicuous. By profession he was a civil engineer, and some very remarkable monuments of his skill and industry are still in existence. He had also sat in Parliament for a number of years, and was one of the most bitter opponents of Mr. Gladstone's proposal to cede the Ionian Islands. Wimple had been a great deal in the Islands and had carried out several important engineering works in Corfu; he therefore was in a position to speak from personal knowledge of the strategical value of the Islands to Great Britain. It may be remembered how on one occasion during a debate in the House on the burning question he twitted Mr. Gladstone with being willing to sacrifice his patriotism to a mere sentiment, and a very lively passage at arms ensued. Mr. Wimple stuck to his guns, and he

predicted that if the Islands were ceded it would be a fatal mistake, and one that England would some day have cause to bitterly regret. This prophecy is being fulfilled, according to competent authorities, and the loss of the Islands has weakened our hold on the Mediterranean very seriously; besides giving Russia a much freer hand than she could possibly have had if England had been in command at Corfu.

Mr. Wimple was known to be a man of very pronounced views, singularly pertinacious and unyielding when he had once made up his mind on any particular subject. It was more than hinted that his private career had been somewhat of a romance, and that there had been serious disagreements between him and his family. Some of his enemies had gone the length of saying spiteful and cruel things about him, but he treated them with studied reserve and crushed them with silence. On one occasion only did he allow himself to be betrayed into a retort. A small-minded political opponent during a contest, was silly enough to say that "no man whose private life contains as many dark pages as Mr Wimple's ought to be placed in any public position of trust and confidence."

This drew from Wimple the stinging reply: "A man who seeks to advance his interests by a low, vulgar attack on the private character—about which he absolutely knows nothing—of an opponent displays so paltry, so mean, so un-English a spirit that right thinking people who still maintain that an Englishman's house is his castle, will think twice before placing *him* in a position of trust; and I have faith enough in my countrymen to believe that they will not tolerate a moral assassin who, disdaining the ordinary rules of fair play, creeps in at the rear window of his opponent's house in order to try and

besmire his character for the sake of some petty gain, pecuniary or political."

That retort told, and the other man was overwhelmingly defeated at the poll.

In 1869, Mr. Wimple who had exceeded the allotted span of life fell a victim to the treachery of the English climate. He had all his life been an exceptionally healthy and robust man, but now he was stricken down by that scourge bronchitis, which in his case was so severe as to leave no hope he would be able to successfully overcome it. It was while he was lying in this hopeless condition that his nurse, Maria Tiptree, called upon me with a request that I would repair at once to Mr. Wimple's residence, as he wished to see me.

Maria Tiptree was a buxom, well-formed, goodlooking woman of about thirty-five, with a thoughtful intelligent face, and a quiet, staid, dignified manner. Of course it will be understood that I knew nothing at all about her. She introduced herself to me.

"I am a professional nurse," she said, "and am nursing Mr. Stansfield Wimple, my name is Maria Tiptree, I am a widow. My employer is exceedingly ill and not expected to recover. In fact, he may die at any moment. I have been driven here in his carriage, and it is his request that you go back with me. The carriage is waiting at the door."

"Do you know why he wishes to see me?" I asked.

"I do not. He is a strangely reserved man, and few people, I imagine, know anything at all about his affairs."

I did not question Mrs. Tiptree further, but announced my readiness to proceed with her to her employer's residence.

Mr. Wimple occupied a very fine house standing in a little more than an acre of ground on the edge

of Wimbledon Common, and thither we drove as fast as a splendid pair of horses could take us with safety. During the drive my companion did not talk much; and such conversation as we held had no reference to Mr. Wimple or the object of my journey.

On arriving at the "Retreat"—such was the name of Mr. Wimple's residence—there was evidence of some confusion, and when we entered the great hall, the footman who opened the door to us said, addressing my companion:

"Mrs. Tiptree, the master's dead."

This sudden and abrupt announcement caused the nurse some pain, for she put one hand to her bosom and the other to her forehead, while a look of trouble swept across her face. Recovering herself she asked:

"How long has he been dead?"

"About half an hour. The doctor is here and Mr. Hulton, the lawyer."

Mrs. Tiptree asked no further questions, but indicating that I was to follow her she led me into an anteroom where a bright fire blazed, and asking me to be seated until she returned she left me. A quarter of an hour later the door opened and she reappeared in company with two gentlemen: one a tall, grey-haired, staid looking man, with the unmistakeable air of a doctor about him. The other was a short, dark, keen-faced man, carrying a black bag in his hand such as lawyers generally use. Mrs. Tiptree unceremoniously introduced them.

"This is Doctor Fisher and Mr. Hulton, the lawyer," she said. Then she added by way of making me known to them—"Mr. Donovan," and having so far performed her duty as she thought she retired.

"Mrs. Tiptree tells me," began Hulton, "that my late client sent her up to town in the carriage to bring you here, and this slip of paper I presume will

be for you. The butler who was present says that his master being suddenly seized with a spasm scribbled this but was unable to speak, and ten minutes afterwards he died."

As Hulton spoke he handed me the slip of paper alluded to. It was a half sheet of note on which was written in a shaky, scratchy hand:

"Donovan—too late—I can't last—will stolen."

"This seems to me to suggest a very serious business," remarked the lawyer, "unless you think, doctor, that the dying man was labouring under some delusion."

"I should be disposed to think not," answered Doctor Fisher cautiously. "The disease from which he has died frequently terminates life in that sudden way by producing constriction of the already half-stopped air passages; but a patient might be in full possession of all his mental faculties up to within a few minutes of actual death."

We were interrupted here by the entrance of the butler bearing a tray, on which were glasses, a decanter of port, another of sherry, and some biscuits. The doctor solemnly poured himself out half a glass of sherry and took a biscuit from the box, and having swallowed the wine and munched his biscuit he said:

"Well, gentlemen, I don't see that I can be of any further use, and possibly you would like to discuss your business alone. I will therefore say good afternoon."

We shook hands and parted; and then as Mr. Hulton leaned back in his chair and stared thoughtfully at the fire he remarked, half musingly:

"It seems to me that unless Wimple was raving there is something seriously wrong." Then looking up at me he asked: "Were you informed why Mr. Wimple wished to see you?"

"No, the nurse called and requested me to drive back with her at once. Not a word was said about the reason for my coming here."

"Umph! It's strange. Well, I received a telegram about an hour and a half ago at my office in the Temple, requesting me to come immediately. I got a train down as soon as I could, but arrived too late. My client had just breathed his last. I inquired for the nurse but was told she had gone to London in the carriage on business for Mr. Wimple, but no one seemed to know when she would be back. Your presence here, when taken in connection with that slip of paper, is ominous."

"So it would seem. But can you explain what it means?"

"I can make a shrewd guess, and in a little while may be able to get confirmatory evidence when we can go upstairs to Mr. Wimple's room." He rang the bell as he spoke, and a manservant appeared. "Frederick, let us know when we can go upstairs again to the master's room, will you?"

"I will, Sir," answered the man respectfully, as he withdrew.

"Did you know Mr. Wimple personally?" asked the lawyer, addressing me.

I told him that I had no personal acquaintance with his client, but that I had heard him speak in the House several times, and knew him as a public man only.

"He was a strange man," continued the lawyer thoughtfully, "and it strikes me if his private life comes to be looked into it will present us with as thrilling a romance as novelist ever penned."

"In what way was he strange?" I asked.

"Well, he was peculiarly self-willed, for one thing, and so determined that having made up his mind to

do a thing I don't believe anything short of death would have stopped him. He had unlimited faith in his own judgment, and though he has been my client for years he would only allow me to do such business for him as had to be done in a strictly legal way, and I really know very little of his private history. He was never in any way disposed to be confidential."

In a few minutes the servant came back to say that we could go upstairs at once, and following the lawyer I mounted the luxuriously-carpeted stairs, to the chamber of death, which had been set in order; the stilled figure on the bed had been robed in the cerements of the grave, and covered over with a white sheet. The room was magnificently furnished, and the bed was heavily hung with curtains. The lawyer approached, and, drawing down the sheet, he gazed on the dead face for some moments. Death had smoothed away the wrinkles, and the deceased looked much younger than he really was. It was a finely chiselled, a patrician face in fact, but the formation of the mouth indicated a very determined nature.

Mr. Hulton replaced the sheet—then crossing the room he entered a small dressing chamber which had no independent door, and could only be entered from Mr. Wimple's bedroom. In one corner was a small iron safe on a stand. Hulton took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and as he selected one and began to insert it in the lock of the safe, he exclaimed:

"I believe there are only two keys to this safe—one my client placed in my possession a short time ago in anticipation of his early death; and the other he kept himself. This is the first time, however, that ever I have been to the safe."

The door was not opened without some difficulty

for the lock was intricate and complicated; but at last it swung back on its hinges and revealed a number of neatly tied-up bundles of documents, which, on examination, proved to be for the most part share certificate and railway scrip, representing a very large sum of money. Hulton made a thorough search of the safe, and that completed he said:

"There is no will here, and that slip of paper in your possession written by the dying man explains why he was in such a hurry to see you and me. I may tell you that some time ago he drew up a will in his own handwriting, and by his request I came down here to read it over and see it properly attested. In it he revoked all former wills, and with the exception of certain legacies to his servants, he left the whole of his property to his daughter Beatrice Mary Staples, for her own free use and enjoyment, and beyond the control of her husband. That will has gone. It has been surreptitiously abstracted from the safe. Mr. Wimple must have discovered its loss just before his death, and hence his reason in sending in such haste for us. No doubt he wished you to trace the thief; and he intended to give me some fresh instructions. His sudden demise has prevented that, and complicated matters terribly.

Mr. Wimple had died a wealthy man, and it can easily be understood the difficulties that had to be faced in the absence of a will were very great. There could be no doubt that Mr. Hulton had read over and seen a will of recent date properly attested, and his client the testator had told him that any other will he might ever have made was revoked and cancelled, and the disposal of his property was to take place according to the provisions of that last will and testament which, for some inscrutable reason he insisted on keeping himself together with all his securities

in the shape of scrip. He had given Hulton a key to the safe, merely as a precautionary measure, and at the same time he had written him a letter in which he said :

"As soon as you hear of my death you will come down, take possession of the will, together with all the securities you find in the safe, a complete list of which is in the hands of my bankers. I have, as you know, appointed you my sole executor, and as the provisions of the will are simple enough, your duties will be relatively slight."

This was plain and straightforward, and if the will had been there all would have been right. But it was not there, and within a few days of Mr. Wimple's death being announced another will was forthcoming, and administration was applied for on behalf of Sarah Helen Wimple, widow of the deceased; and the Reverend John Ernest Arkwright, clergyman of the Established Church, and Peter Felsted, Builder and Contractor, were the trustees and executors named in the will. This will was dated about seven years previous to the death of the testator. It was in his own handwriting, and was duly and properly attested.

Here at once we were confronted with a tremendous legal difficulty; and on the strength of the letter in Mr. Hulton's possession, and of his sworn evidence, probate was withheld for the time, and it seemed as if there was likely to be a busy time for the lawyers. It became necessary to let the light of publicity on to some of the dead man's private affairs, and just so much as was made public do I intend to deal with here, and no more.

Mr. Wimple was a member of a very good county family, but in his youth he had been extremely wild, and contracted a clandestine marriage with his father's cook. By this person he had two children; a son

and a daughter. The son died young; the daughter grew up, and married against her father's will a young man named William Staples, who was a clerk in a firm of Colonial Merchants in the city of London. There was any amount of evidence to make it clear that her father was very strongly attached to Beatrice, and though he had been known to declare that he would disinherit her owing to her marriage to a man for whom he had an aversion, it was clear he had relented towards the end; hence his last will in which he desired that everything should be settled on her for her sole use and enjoyment. The young lady's mother had died when Beatrice was a child, and soon afterwards Mr. Wimple married again. This time his choice fell upon a humble woman who was the caretaker of and pew opener in a church in one of the southern suburbs of London. At that time she lived with her brother who was "something in the building line."

This marriage proved a very unhappy one. Mrs. Wimple was an ignorant woman and did not understand her husband. She never openly lived with Mr. Wimple, who established her in a house near Salisbury. Three children were born of the union. A son and two daughters. They were all living, and the son, who had studied for civil engineering, was abroad. His father had long ago disowned him. Peter Felsted was the brother of Mrs. Wimple, and was in a large way of business as builder and contractor in the town of Salisbury. He had been started in business by his brother-in-law. Had failed twice, but had been started again with Mr. Wimple's money, and at the time of Wimple's death he was apparently flourishing. The Rev. John Ernest Arkwright was a clergyman in the parish in which Mrs. Wimple and her brother resided.

From this gentleman we learnt that Mr. Wimple had been in the habit one time of visiting his wife frequently, and seemed very friendly with the brother. Latterly, however, he discovered that his wife had been false to him; and her brother, although seemingly doing well, was not solvent, and pestered his brother-in-law for loans of money. These were the causes, no doubt, which prompted Wimple to revoke the will he had made in the favour of his wife and her family, and leave everything to his daughter Beatrice. Under the first will she was to receive an annuity only of four hundred pounds a year. It appeared that between Beatrice and her stepmother strong enmity existed.

It will thus be seen that in this disunited family there were many conflicting elements which Mr. Wimple made no efforts to reconcile. In each case his matrimonial venture had been an unfortunate one, and even the offsprings of those marriages had not brought him any joy, although he had always been exceedingly fond of Beatrice.

There was one other incident in his life which having been made public, I am at liberty to touch upon. Years before his death he formed a strong attachment, which developed into passionate love, for a very beautiful young woman, one of two sisters who lived with their widowed mother. Their father had been a distinguished officer in the Indian Army. He lost his life by assassination while conducting a surveying expedition in Afghanistan. The youngest daughter Maude seems to have fascinated Mr. Wimple. She was a woman of extraordinary beauty and of great accomplishments. Could Wimple have married her she would not only have adorned his household, but have been a fitting companion for him. He seems to have behaved with great munificence to her and

her family. He bought the house in which she and her mother and sister lived, and presented it to her. For years he had allowed them a thousand pounds a year, and a short time before his death—feeling, probably, that it was inadvisable to mention her in his will—he gave Maude a cheque for five thousand pounds.

So much for the private affairs of this remarkable gentleman; and now for the robbery. The will had been abstracted from the safe, that was clear. The safe had not been forced, but opened with the key. But two keys were in existence. One Mr. Wimple himself always kept, the other was in possession of Mr. Hulton, the lawyer. Whoever opened the safe must have opened it with one of these two keys. There was not the slightest reason for supposing that Hulton's key had been used. Therefore it must have been the one in Wimple's possession. This decided two important points. Firstly, the thief knew the will was in the safe. Secondly, he or she must have known where Mr. Wimple kept the key. This in turn argued that the thief was a member of the household. Now, who else could possibly be interested in the abstraction of the will but Mrs. Wimple and her family? But neither she nor any member of her family ever went to the house, consequently she must have had a confederate. So I set to work to try and find out who that confederate was likely to be.

The nurse, Mrs. Tiptree, was reported to be a very respectable woman. She had often been to Mr. Wimple's house to nurse him in trifling illnesses; for he seems to have had an aversion to strangers about him. About a year before his death he was laid up for two months through a carriage accident. The horses in his carriage bolted one day. He attempted to get out: was thrown heavily to the ground

and sustained a slight concussion of the spine, which necessitated absolute rest for weeks. Mrs. Tiptree attended to him during that period. On his recovery she went away, but returned as soon as he was seized with his fatal illness. He, according to the statement of his housekeeper and other servants, was much attached to her, and he had been heard to say she was a most perfect nurse. Owing to the confidence he reposed in her she was a highly privileged person in the household.

These particulars led me to look upon Mrs. Tiptree with more than ordinary interest. But there was one little fact which told greatly in her favour. According to Mr. Hulton, who, though he did not keep a copy of the will remembered it very well, this woman under the will that had been stolen was entitled to an immediate legacy, free of duty, of five hundred pounds, whereas in the will brought forward by Mrs. Wimple the nurse's name was not mentioned. Therefore if she had stolen the will she had done herself out of five hundred pounds. That certainly seemed to negative the theory that she was the thief. Nevertheless, I did not abandon her, and in questioning Mr. Hulton I ascertained that the will was drawn up during the time that Wimple was lying in bed through the injury to the spine. When the question of attesting it was being discussed she was in the room, and forgetting for the moment that she was interested in it, Mr. Wimple said:

"Here, Mrs. Tiptree will do for one of the witnesses."

But the lawyer answered:—

"How can she witness the will when you are leaving her by its provisions five hundred pounds?"

Mrs. Tiptree, of course, heard that remark; consequently she knew that she was to get something,

and on the first blush it appeared preposterous that she should have gone against her interests to such an extent as to steal the will.

I have stated that she was a privileged person in the house, therefore it was not surprising that she occasionally asked some of her friends to visit her. A fortnight or so before Mr. Wimple's death, a young man came to see her, and she stated to the house-keeper that it was her nephew, who had been abroad for some years and had just come home. He was described as a highly respectable looking young fellow of about six or seven-and-twenty. Altogether he called three or four times. On the last occasion he stayed till after eleven, and had supper in his aunt's room, which adjoined Mr. Wimple's. Another detail which I elicited struck me as having a bearing on the matter. It was this, on the very evening that the nephew stayed so late, the doctor administered a sleeping draught to his patient, who had been unable to sleep for two nights. This was a small matter, but by putting all the items together and examining them in the light of deductive reasoning, I came to the conclusion that if I was to solve the mystery I must find out a good deal about Mrs. Tiptree's past career.

One result of my inquiries was that in the course of the ensuing month, all unknown to her and to everyone else, save Hulton and one or two other people whom it was advisable should be informed, I was on my way to Montreal. My reason for taking this, as it may seem, extraordinary step, I shall explain presently. My *object* was to have an interview with a gentleman named Walter Copeland, who was a civil engineer by profession. On arriving at Montreal, I found that Copeland was known there, as he had done some work in connection with the surveying that was

going on for the projected railway across the continent; and it was believed he had again started with a surveying party, who had resolved to push on somehow into British Columbia, and thence down the Pacific slope to Vancouver. Whence, so it was believed, Copeland intended to sail by the first ship for China.

I proved unmistakably that he had really started on his adventurous journey, and as he was known to be an intrepid and resolute traveller, there was little doubt expressed that he would go on. He had got a long start of me, but it was necessary I should overtake him before he was enabled to leave for the East. I tracked him down to Toronto, where I found that he and his party had chartered a small steamer to convey them to Port Arthur, at the head of Lake Superior. By this means they saved the long land journey from Ottawa; and that part of the proposed route had been pretty well surveyed. It was the country beyond that; over the prairies and through the Rockies, that the engineers were anxious to get information about, for it was practically a *terra incognita*.

I had to kick my heels for several days at Toronto, before I secured a passage in a tug boat going up Lake Superior to engage in the lumber towing trade. For the benefit of my readers who may not understand this term, I would explain that lumber means timber. In the great forests round the head of Lake Superior the trees are cut down, stripped of their branches, then tossed into the lake, where enormous rafts are constructed. These rafts are then taken in tow by tugs, which convey them to points of shipment.

The tug in which I embarked was known as the *Algoma*, and a most uncomfortable craft she was. In Lake Huron we nearly came to grief in a hurricane;

and after passing the rapids at Sault Ste Marie, and getting into Lake Superior, we experienced a series of such heavy gales that we had frequently to run for shelter into some desolate creek or bay, and on one occasion we were driven on shore at a small island, fortunately without injuring the vessel to any great extent. And when the engineers had patched her up we started once more on our adventurous voyage, and after a few more trifling mishaps we reached our destination in Thunder Bay, the voyage having occupied a fortnight. This Bay is as wild and magnificent as anything to be found in America almost. At that time all round its shores was one great wilderness of primeval forest, with here and there a lumber station. Now the Canadian Pacific line which skirts it has caused busy towns to spring up, and factories and huge grain elevators are to be seen everywhere.

An engineer's camp had been formed at Fort William (now one of the railway stations), and also a trading camp. I ascertained that Copeland and his companions had stayed a few days in that camp, and had then started forward for the frontier outpost of Winnipeg. I therefore had no alternative but to follow him. It was a long trail, but what could I do? Purchasing two good horses, and a pack horse, together with proper clothing, provisions, a tent, a rifle, revolvers, a good supply of ammunition, and a small light birch bark canoe, all these things being carried on the pack-horse, and engaging the services of a white trapper known as "Buck Jump Joe," and two Indian guides, I set off in pursuit of my man. Soon after leaving the head of the lake we plunged into the forest wilderness, and for days and days we travelled through desolate regions where hundreds of lonely lakes, big and little, stretched out in a seemingly endless chain. As the Indians knew the route well we were never at

fault; and of fresh provisions we had ample, for Buck Jump Joe and the guides were adepts at trapping game and fish. Traversing the wide valley of Red River we reached the desolate station of Winnipeg, where I ascertained that Copeland and his party had left a fortnight before.

Winnipeg, at this date, was one of the outposts of the Hudson Bay Fur Trading Company, now—and I speak from personal experience, for I visited the place a year ago—it is a huge town with colossal hotels, splendid shops, big warehouses, and a junction for ever so many great lines of railway; besides being one of the principal stations of the Canadian Pacific. Its rapid rise from a lonely frontier post to a stupendous commercial and industrial centre is truly marvellous. But such is progress in modern America. To-day there is a wind-swept prairie, to-morrow the prairie is covered with towns. When I followed Copeland across the continent tens of thousands of buffaloes roamed the plains. To-day nothing but huge piles of whitening bones show where the animals' haunts were. Not a single buffalo now exists. It is sad, but we live in a practical age. In the race for wealth sentiment is brushed on one side, and the beauty of nature is nothing as compared with the beauty of money. The wild free life of our forefathers in America, Australia, Africa, and elsewhere will soon be but a tradition.

To reach the Rocky Mountains from Winnipeg there is a journey of about twelve hundred miles over the rolling prairies. Having refitted, laid in an ample stock of provisions, engaged the services of three additional Indians, and appointed Buck Jump Joe to "boss" the travelling arrangements, I set off once more. Fortunately the weather was all that could be desired—neither too hot nor too cold—

and we were able to make long daily marches.

It was monotonous work, that prairie traveling, and thankful indeed I was when at last we came in sight of the foot hills of the Rockies. In a rough, preliminary way, some of the railway route had been marked out by the pioneers, and we were able to follow this until the stupendous scenery of the Rockies themselves burst upon us. These tremendous barriers of mountains for a time baffled the engineers. They could bring their line easy enough all the way from Montreal to the mountains: but to take it over the mountains was the difficulty. For years exploring parties had been at work trying to find a suitable passage, but in my time no route had yet been fixed upon. It had been suggested that the course of the Bow River should be followed, and some of the hardy adventurers had gone that way. The Indians said they could lead us by a better route, but Buck Jump Joe was in favour of the Bow, as being more practical for our horses. For two days we remained in our camp, and Joe and the Indians hunted, supplying our larder with plenty of fresh provisions, including wild sheep and bear's meat.

On the second day a little band of prospectors, who had been in the mountains and were returning east, came upon us, and for the time we made merry; for when men meet in these lonely wildernesses there is no formal introduction needed. They fraternize at once. The prospectors told us that a three days' journey up the Bow was a surveying camp, and that a party had recently arrived from the east, and were resting there. From the description given me I had no difficulty in determining that it was the party with which Copeland was travelling. So the next day when our friends left us I struck camp, resolved to push on

with all speed and overtake my man. I was fortunate in being able to do this. He and his companions had lingered, as they could not agree on the route they should take through the stern regions of snow-clad and ice-bound mountains, belted about as they were by stupendous forests, the undisturbed homes and haunts of the bear and the wild goat and sheep.

Of course I did not then make myself known to Copeland, and we were heartily welcomed as brother travellers in those untrodden regions and vast solitudes. I found him a good-looking young fellow, reckless and rollicking, and full of the daring and enthusiasm of the explorer. As I could not arrest him and convey him back as a prisoner over the two thousand miles of journey already traversed, there was nothing for it but to join issues with his party and endeavour to reach Vancouver. On the fifth day we all moved off by common consent, and by intricate and most difficult travelling, during which we had to run no small amount of peril, we at last struck the great Columbia River, and then the chain of the Rockies was behind us. But a still greater chain confronted us in the Selkirks, a mighty barrier of unexplored peaks as virgin from the tread of man as they were when the world was created. Language seems poor indeed when one attempts to describe such scenery as that which everywhere surrounded us. The awful height, the stupendous depths, the mighty river, the limitless forests of giant trees, the glittering snows and glaciers, the appalling precipices, all made up a panorama to which no language could do justice. My Indians now proved invaluable. With rare instinct and wonderful topographical knowledge they led us over the Selkirks by an extraordinary pass - not that now used by the railway, being twenty miles at least

to the north of it—and when after weeks of roughing and hardships, with hair-breadth escapes by flood and field, we had conquered the Selkirks, we made our way down into the Great Fraser Valley; through which the turbulent River Fraser forces its way to the Pacific Ocean.

I need not dwell upon the incidents of our journey through British Columbia. We were a worn and somewhat dilapidated party now. Buck Jump Joe left us and went off to join a gold prospecting party. We had lost one of our Indians through an accident, he fell over a precipice; and one of the white men had died of disease. Before finally descending the Pacific slope we had to cross a lesser range of mountains, called the Gold Range; but though their peaks are covered with eternal snow they are pierced by many practicable and well-known passes, which have long been used by miners and hunters coming up from the Pacific shores into British Columbia. The worst part of our journey, therefore, was over, and after nearly nine months of exciting travel we reached Vancouver—then a straggling port, with rows of wooden houses built amongst the forest that fringed the bay. Anyone who visits the place now will find a handsome town, wide streets, tram cars, electric light, busy wharves and quays, huge hotels, and all the requirements of modern life.

Our party secured accommodation in a so-called hotel kept by a Chinaman. It bore the high sounding and pretentious name of "The Grand Pacific Hotel." It was a wooden shanty of the roughest kind, but after our long wanderings we were thankful for the shelter it afforded us, and which, by comparison with what we had gone through, seemed a luxury.

And now the time has come when I may tell the

reader why I followed Copeland over such a long trail. My suspicions having been aroused with reference to Mrs. Tiptree, I procured her marriage certificate and found that her maiden name had been Felsted. It will be remembered that Mrs. Wimple's maiden name was Felsted; I therefore felt convinced there was something more than a coincidence here, and pushing my researches deeper and deeper I brought to light that Mrs. Tiptree was Mrs. Wimple's sister. But this was not all. Walter "Copeland" whose name was not Copeland at all but Wimple, and therefore true enough it was he was Mrs. Tiptree's nephew. He had been an exceedingly wild youth, long disowned by his father. When he was only seventeen he had contracted a marriage with a ballet girl who was four or five years his senior. He was then only an apprentice in a firm of civil engineers in Westminster. After two years of a cat and dog life he and his wife separated; he went out to Canada, and for good and substantial reasons, no doubt, he felt it desirable to change his name, and he took that of Copeland, though a little later his wife killed herself with drink.

Without making known any discovery to Mrs. Tiptree, I asked her if she did not think it probable young "Copeland" had stolen the will, and her answer was "If any will has been stolen he must have taken it. Though why he should have done such a thing heaven only knows, I don't."

I did not doubt that heaven knew; and from the data I had massed together I felt I could make a pretty shrewd guess as to why he had done it, so I resolved to follow him and get from his own lips, if possible, a confession which would serve at least to invalidate the will in Mrs. Wimple's possession. It is, of course, not difficult to deduce from the fore-

going particulars that Mrs. Tiptree must have had some patent motive for aiding and abetting young Wimple in abstracting the will, because by so doing she sacrificed an immediate payment of five hundred pounds. The opinion I had formed of her was that she was by no means a bad-minded or bad-hearted woman. She had led so far as I could ascertain, an honest and respectable life, and in disposition she was gentle and kindly. But she was not a woman of any strength of mind, and I was of opinion she was likely to be swayed and influenced by sentiment, and in this instance she had been so swayed by her sister, no doubt by specious arguments—Mrs. Tiptree having previously informed her about the new will and legacy she was to inherit—and false representations had induced her to steal the last will on the promise and understanding that she should be paid a much larger sum.

Young Wimple, or Copeland as we will call him, had just come home. He had not seen his father for years, and none of the servants in the "Retreat" knew him. These considerations led Mrs. Tiptree to regard him as a suitable person for working out the little plot; for she thought her share of the wrong would be reduced to the shadow of nothing, if she did not actually take the will away with her own hands. This, of course, was a mere juggling with conscience, but a tyro in the study of human nature will know how common that sort of thing is amongst a certain class of people.

To illustrate this I will cite a murder case in which I was interested some years ago. A man, a discharged soldier, was indicted with being an accessory to the fact, inasmuch that he, being a caretaker in the house where the crime was committed, placed facilities in the way of the principal actor, whereby he was enabled

to commit the deed. The accessory swore and vowed he was an innocent man and when he was sentenced to penal servitude for life he created a remarkable scene in court by solemnly declaring with dramatic passion in the name of the Almighty, that he was falsely condemned. Subsequently he actually drew up a statement and submitted it to the Home Secretary, in which he still averred his innocence, and in order to prove it he said all he had done was to leave the door of the house open, in consequence of which the murderer was enabled to get in. In spite of this fact the accessory could not see where his moral guilt came in. Nor could many hundreds of other people, for a petition numerously signed was prepared by some of the lower classes, and forwarded to the Home Office, praying for the fellow's release on the grounds of his innocence. The belief in his own innocence took such a hold upon him that he became a maniac and he subsequently died raving mad in the Broadmoor Criminal Lunatic Asylum. Many such cases might be brought forward to give point to my argument, but this one must suffice; for to the scoffer and the sceptic I would say if one ounce of solid truth will not convince you, a ton of argument would be of no more avail.

To return to Copeland. The opinion I had formed of him during the time I had been with him was that he was in a certain way clever; and beyond doubt daring and adventurous; but singularly thoughtless. He lacked the calculating qualities of the scientific mind. He did things from some sudden impulse and never paused to consider what the consequences might be. This characteristic was displayed in his daily life in a very conspicuous way. Here is an example. During the time we were travelling through the Rockies it was necessary on one occasion to cross a swollen

river. The birch bark canoe was launched and by some stupidity was allowed to drift away before anyone could get into it; without a moment's reflection and dressed as he was, young Copeland sprang into the river, and would of a certainty have been drowned had not one of the Indians nobly plunged in after him and brought him ashore again.

During our journey I had cultivated his acquaintance so closely that he showed great attachment for me; consequently as "a travelling chum" there was nothing out of the way when I asked him on our arrival at Vancouver if he would share a room with me. To this he gladly consented, and so unconsciously played into my hands. On the second night after our arrival as we smoked our pipes sitting on the edge of our respective beds I suddenly exclaimed: "Walter Wimple I have something serious to say to you." The mention of his name so amazed and startled him that the pipe fell from his lips and he caught it in his hands, a shower of sparks shooting forth by the jerk, while his face went deathly pale.

"How do you know my name is Wimple?" he stammered, the concern he felt displaying itself in the expression of his eyes.

I smiled as I answered:

"I know a good deal about you and your family; including your aunt Tiptree and your late father. I came out to Canada to find you. I overtook you at the Rockies, and here we are. Can you now guess what my errand is?" He fumbled with his pipe, and I saw his eyes wander to the table where our revolvers lay. The instinct of self-preservation, quickened in his face by the wild adventurous life he had led, prompted him for the moment probably to attempt to settle matters in the rough and ready fashion in vogue amongst the lumber men and half civilized miners of

the Western Wilderness. I rose, went to the tables, took the weapons up, and said :

"No, Walter, my boy, you mustn't try to get rid of one wrong by committing a greater."

"I had no thought of that," he growled somewhat sullenly. "But, I suppose, the fact is you've trailed me on account of the will business."

"Yes," I answered, "that is so."

"Well, you must blame my aunt and mother for it."

"I believe that. I believe they made a tool of you."

"They did," he exclaimed, brightening up a little. "My aunt told me my father had no business to keep my mother and the family out of their rights, and that if I took the will nobody would be any the wiser. As I had no great love for the old man—for I never thought he had treated us well—I consented."

"Did you make anything out of the transaction?"

"Some. My uncle Felsted gave me five hundred pounds on condition that I cleared out of the country at once."

"And of course you gave up the stolen will, or destroyed it, I suppose?"

"No, sirree!" he exclaimed with a little triumphant laugh. "I wasn't such a blamed fool as that. I thought that some day it might be useful to me."

"Where is it?" I asked.

He hesitated for some moments. Then said, as he puffed at his pipe :

"Look here, pard,"—he had picked up a good deal of the American back-woods phraseology in his travels—"Look here, pard, will you promise not to jump my claim if I give you the paper."

"I can make no conditions," I answered. "You had better leave the matter in my hands; but you *must* give me the will."

He sat on the edge of the bed for some time, dangling his legs; smoking vigorously and staring vacantly. He was turning the matter over in his own mind, and I did not interrupt him. Presently he jumped up and going to the corner of the room where his things were rolled up in cowhide and water-proof—the mode of transporting one's personal effects in travelling through the wilderness—he spread the bundle out, and from the centre he drew a flat leather writing-case. This he opened and from a number of papers and letters, he produced the will and a *carte-de-visite* photograph.

"There's the darned will," he said, thrusting it into my hands. "And do you see that picture?"—The photograph was that of an exceedingly pretty girl, and I noticed by the imprint it had been taken in Hong-Kong. "I'm going to marry her. She will be my second wife. My first was a demon. That girl lives in Hong-Kong with her dad, who keeps a store there. Now, you see, I'm playing fair with you, and you mustn't give me away. I'm bound for Hong-Kong, that's my game, and she's expecting me. And if you were to come between me and her, pard, I might do something violent, see!"

I could not help smiling at his rough and blunt manner no less than at his threat. And as I secured the will in my pocket-book which I placed in a body-belt I wore and in which I carried my money and other valuables, I remarked looking at the photo, "She's a very pretty girl, and if ever you are married I hope she will make you a good wife and you will make her a good husband. But there must be no conditions now. We'll talk the matter over to-morrow."

"Give us your hand on that," he said, "and don't play low."

I shook hands with him, and a few minutes later the candle was blown out and we were both in bed. Soon he was locked in sound sleep, and snoring like a trooper; but I lay awake for hours, pondering over the strange drama in which I had played my part. Daylight had dawned before I fell asleep and I did not awake for hours afterwards. Then I noted that my companion's bed was vacant, and his traps had been removed from the room. When I went down and made inquiries about Copeland I was informed he had taken a passage for Hong-Kong in a trading steamer that had cleared three hours ago. I frankly confess that I was not sorry, for I was relieved of a difficulty. And though he had rendered himself liable to punishment I had no warrant and no instructions to convey him back to England.

In a few days I got passage in a steamer going down to San Francisco. Then I took the long dreary railway journey to New-York and came home in the *Helvetia*, one of the National Company's steamers.

During my absence Mr. Hulton had succeeded in getting Mr. Wimple's affairs thrown into Chancery, and when I arrived on the scene with the last will and testament of the deceased there was—as may be imagined—consternation amongst those who had conspired to frustrate his intentions. During the time that had elapsed one of the conspirators had died, namely Felsted, Mrs. Wimple's brother.

Mrs. Wimple escaped conviction, owing to the lack of necessary legal evidence to establish her guilt; and Mrs. Tiptree who was more fool than knave got off with the light punishment of twelve months imprisonment. As for Copeland nothing more was heard of him; nor did the authorities show any concern to have him arrested. There is no doubt,

however, if he had returned to England he would have found himself in the clutches of the law. He was by no means a bad sort of fellow and I hope he married his girl and lived happy ever after. For the part I had played I received a handsome recognition at the hands of Mrs. Beatrice Staples; while as for the numerous lawyers mixed up in the case; it goes without saying they had some choice pickings. But all is well that ends well.

THE WORLD OF WHITE DEATH.

It was towards the end of boreal March, when a certain balminess in the air, and a brightness in the sun gave promise and hope that the last of an unusually bitter winter had come, and genial spring, with her vernal breath, would soon awaken the flowers to life, and bring forth the buds on the naked trees which had so long been buffeted and tempest-tossed by icy gales and fierce snowstorms, that Henry Tyler Twort fled from London. For years there had been no more familiar name to Londoners than that of Tyler Twort. It was uncommon and striking, even as the man himself was. And seldom was there any movement in the cause of charity in which his name did not figure conspicuously. He was a fine art patron, a dabbler in literature; a giver of good dinners; a *bon-vivant*; moreover he was also the head of the important firm of Twort and Co., general merchants in the City of London. Apart from that he sat in Parliament for a Midland borough where he owned a considerable estate. He had been for many years a very prominent politician; and being gifted with the power of eloquence allied to a commanding and imposing presence, his light was not hidden under a bushel, but shone forth into many a dark place where the hearts of his humbler brethren were gladdened thereby. For Henry Tyler Twort posed as a friend

of the poor, and he really had been instrumental in effecting numerous reforms in the interests of those who were unable to help themselves or make their feeble voices heard. So apart from being merchant prince, politician, charity giver, church-goer, art patron, litterateur, *bon-vivant*, he was also a philanthropist; men sang his praises; women blessed him.

All this being as I have stated, how came it, will be asked, that so excellent a man fled? For does not flight imply some evil done? Otherwise why should a person flee? He may fly before a roaring lion in jungle or desert; before a prairie fire sweeping over the plain, or before an advancing flood which threatens a deluge. In such a connection flight is understandable; but when a prominent citizen who has hitherto been regarded with respect and honour, disappears suddenly from his haunts taking with him a large amount of valuable property, the inference is he has offended the mighty majesty of the Law, and that Justice demands that he should be brought back. But in order to make it clear why Tyler Twort fled, some particulars of his life are necessary.

He was the son of a city merchant who, however, never rose to any distinction either as a trader or as a citizen. But no one breathed a word against his good name, and he managed to bring up a family of six children, including Henry Tyler—his eldest son—respectably and well. Dying when he had played his part and fulfilled his destiny, he left each of his children a few hundreds a year, and in addition Henry succeeded to the business. As a youth he had shown himself to be ambitious—even vain; as a young man he desired to be foremost in the ranks. He wanted to go ahead as the bell-wether rather than be lost amidst the crowding and hurrying flock of human sheep.

These are traits in a man's character which, when allied to a well-balanced mind, and a high regard for ethical purity, are calculated to help him to reach the pinnacle of fame, or at least to earn the good will of his fellow-beings. In all probability Henry launched himself on his career with the best of intentions. He set to work to build up a big commercial fabric; his work was crowned with success, and at an age when most men are still struggling against the stream, he was accounted wealthy. Had he been less ambitious, less vain—vanity, perhaps, was his strongest weakness—he might have carved his name indelibly in the hearts of his fellow-men, and have lived for ages in the public memory.

When his business was flourishing he essayed to consolidate it still more, by taking in as partners various members of his family, including his brothers and a sister, who invested their little capital, and trusted to their brilliant and gifted brother, to guide them—if not to El-Dorado, at least to something like a competency.

He married before he was thirty. The lady of his choice brought him no dowry beyond a handsome face, which in her case was a fortune. When they had been married for some years and no children had come to bless their union, they took under their care Gwendoline Silva, the orphan daughter of a Portuguese father and an English mother. Twort and Silva had been firm and intimate friends for many years, for Silva had early come to England. He represented an old and noble Portuguese family who for many generations had been settled in Lisbon or its neighbourhood, and were the owners of enormous vineyards, the products of which found their way to nearly all the civilized parts of the world. Silva was the London representative, but unhappily he died

young. He had been left a widower four years previously, when his English wife yielded up her own life in giving life to her daughter. Therefore at her father's death Gwendoline was but four years of age, and being heiress to a large fortune Silva made his old and esteemed friend her guardian and trustee. For about twelve years or thereabouts Mrs. Twort was a loving and affectionate mother to the girl, but death removed her after a brief illness, and Gwendoline was in the sole care of her foster-father.

For a long time Mr. Twort had been occupying a luxurious mansion near Hyde Park where he lived in almost regal splendour. His house was the gathering place for some of the most notable of the prominent men and women of the day. Theology, science, art, literature, politics, the press, the stage, the world of trade were represented at those hospitable receptions. And Twort, the Politician, the Philanthropist the Trader, was as a king upon his throne around which gathered a multitude of admiring subjects ever ready to render him homage, and shout his praises.

Gwendoline was noted for her beauty; many a young man turned to her with longing gaze, for apart from the charms that Nature had endowed her with, it was said that when she came of age she would be able to count her fortune by scores of thousands. Her guardian and foster-father, however, guarded her well, and with a keen-eyed jealousy that kept at bay any who might have been actuated by unworthy motives.

After his wife's death Mr. Twort seemed to become more ostentatious in his mode and style of living. Humility and lowliness certainly formed no part of his composition. He was evidently a man who loved to hear the praises of his fellows ringing in his ear; to be distinguished, to have homage paid to him, to

be considered great—were the things he aimed at, and weak, pitifully weak as it was, it certainly would have been tolerated and perhaps forgiven had his heart remained sound, his mind pure. But the form of weakness he displayed was beyond all doubt a form of madness; as much madness as the miser's greed for gold, the lust of the *roué*, or the ambition of a Napoleon the Great. He was very human; he dreamed human dreams of greatness; and such a man would, if he could, make the sun, the moon, the stars, the flowing tides, the bursting buds, the wanton winds, subservient to him. It is a perilous ambition, but men in all ages have endeavoured to pose as demi-gods. Alas it is sad indeed that the little span of human life—the inappreciable drop in the mighty ocean of eternity should be turned to such poor account. And yet perhaps even such a being may be fulfilling some great destiny in the working out of the incomprehensible human scheme. Who can tell!

Between three and four years after his wife's death Tyler Twort fled, and with him went his foster-daughter. She was then about twenty and he was fifty or turned. And with his flight his greatness fell with a crash, so to speak, and crumbled into the dust; while the sycophants who had worshipped him looked on aghast at the rottenness of the fabric which they had considered so solid, so genuine. For years he had propped this fabric up with tinsel instead of gold. His greatness was the greatness of a blown bladder which being pricked, shrivelled into nothingness. To drop the metaphor, his life for long had been a living lie; he had been insolvent for years; and not only had he shamelessly pledged the credit and ruined the firm which he represented, but he had fraudulently appropriated his ward's fortune to his own selfish ends.

Many and many a day had been swept into the ocean of the past since there had been such an *exposé*, such a scandal. Mrs. Grundy wrung her hands in dumb anguish; the meek-faced parsons, the æsthetic artists, the whole brotherhood of literary men, the pure-souled representatives of the drama, the lamb-like lights of the press, the whole world of Fashion and Frivolity moaned and wept in chorus: "Who'd have thought it?" "It was so shocking." "So unexpected." "Such faith had been placed in him." The world does not like to be deceived; and it had been deceived. It had believed Henry Tyler Twort to be Virtue incarnate, whereas he was a vulgar swindler, a heartless thief. Then there swooped down upon the belongings he had left behind an army of creditors, and terrible was the wailing, loud the gnashing of teeth when stretching forth their greedy hands they clutched not fruit but ashes.

"Where had he gone to?" asked the world in clamouring chorus. "What power did he exercise to induce his ward to accompany him in his guilty flight?"

The latter question was easy to answer. It was the basilisk power that men have ever exercised over the weak and susceptible natures of women. For woman is trusting and confiding, and in man's heart sits a devil.

If Society has no pity for the woman who parts with the jewel of her womanhood, the Law has none for the man who has outraged his trust-eeship. And so Justice said: "This man must be sought for; he must be hunted down; he must be haled in chains before me that I may smite him hip and thigh and break him on the wheel."

The duty of hunting him down fell to my lot. A warrant was issued for his arrest, and I was entrusted

with its execution. A little inquiry soon revealed to me, that sudden as the collapse seemed, he had long been preparing for his flight. He had gradually realized all the securities he could, and with a cunning which no one would have given him credit for, he had opened accounts at various banks; so that when his schemes were ripe he could withdraw his money without attracting that attention which he would have done, if he had placed all in the keeping of one bank and suddenly taken that all out. His ward's property he had made ducks and drakes of and had squandered thousands of her fortune.

Not for one single instant did I think he would remain in any part of the United Kingdom; nor was it in the least degree likely that he would proceed to any British possession. But in what direction had he bent his fugitive steps? By comparing notes and studying detail I came to the conclusion that he had left London by night, alone and with little or no luggage. Some days before, his ward had gone to Southampton—so it was understood—to spend a few days with some friends, though nobody could be found who knew what friends they were. She had taken a remarkably large quantity of luggage with her, most of which she had packed herself, not allowing her maid or any of the other servants to interfere. That in itself was significant. It clearly indicated a guilty knowledge. Now, why had she gone to Southampton?—I established pretty conclusively that she really had gone there.—It must have been with a view to getting a vessel for some foreign port. From Southampton steamers sailed for the Brazils, the West Indies, Australia, America, Africa, and for France. To my mind it would have been doing violence to the most ordinary intelligence to suppose she had gone alone, wherever she had gone to. Twort had joined

her, but where? I considered that it was not likely he did so in Southampton; and my reason for so considering was this: He was a conspicuous man, and unless he had resorted to the common trick of disguise, he could hardly have hoped to have escaped observation had he attempted to leave in company with a young lady. I argued with myself against the theory of disguise, because if he had entered any place as Tyler Twort, and issued forth as somebody else, information to that effect would surely have been forthcoming, unless of course he had paid somebody handsomely to keep silent. But having regard to the character of the man, his vanity, his remarkable shrewdness, I did not think it likely he had adopted a disguise. He who for years had cozened the world, and juggled with society, would, even in his fall, have sufficient faith in himself to believe he could still delude. Again, by taking a third person into his secret who had no interest in him beyond an immediate monetary reward, would be to increase his risk manifold, and he was far too clever to forget that.

These were my reasons for dismissing the theory of disguise. So I was forced to the conclusion that he had not joined Gwendoline Silva in Southampton or in any part of England, but that they had fixed a rendezvous abroad. To have gone to the West Indies or in fact to any British possession would have been to run into the jaws of the lion. To the Brazils? Gwendoline would have had to have travelled there alone unless he had joined her at the post of embarkation, Southampton being the last port touched at. But from Southampton to some point of France she might have travelled and travelled alone, and he going by another route had met her there. At Havre perhaps. At Bordeaux likely.

On this hypothesis I set to work. Perhaps it will

here be asked, "What would be his object in going to France?" To that question I can only suggest an answer. It must be remembered that I was guided entirely by hypothetical reasoning, based upon the knowledge I had acquired of the man's habits and his disposition. I would urge again the seeming unlikelihood that a person of his intelligence would rush off to a British possession where his arrest would be certain, and having, no doubt, an acquaintance with the principles of international law, he would also avoid those countries where extradition treaties were in force; and probably his intention in going to Bordeaux was because it was an excellent *point du départ* for Spain, and he would be able to hurry through France before the hue and cry had spread to that country. I have already given my reason for supposing it unlikely that he had left England in company with the young lady. She had unquestionably gone to Southampton. That I established conclusively. Now unless she had doubled back on her tracks and rejoined him in England she would leave Southampton alone. It will be said that the fugitives might have sailed to America. True, they might; but in that case Twort would have had to go to the Hampshire port himself if he wished to voyage with the lady, because the vessels trading from Southampton to America did not touch anywhere else in England. But most carefully conducted inquiries failed to elicit any fact which would seem to point to his having been in Southampton.

It will thus be seen I was forced to the only really logical conclusion to be arrived at, which was, that the fugitives in order to render the tracing of them more difficult, had arranged that she should start first for Southampton, carrying the luggage with her; then that she should proceed from there to the nearest

convenient point of meeting abroad. If their objective point was Spain, they would be able to reach that country before I could overtake them, unless they lingered by the way. At any rate I started in pursuit, going direct to Havre; for failing to get information about them there, I could reach Bordeaux much quicker by train than I could by steamer from England. Necessarily on reaching Havre I directed my attention to the custom-house. The season being still winter, few passengers were travelling, so that I had a better chance. My supposition turned out to be correct. A lady had arrived, a few days before, by the Southampton steamer. She was young, handsome, and possessed an unusual quantity of luggage. She was joined at the station by a gentleman; good-looking, well-dressed, middle-aged, with whiskers and hair turning grey. He had been staying for two days at the Hotel Frascati. As soon as their luggage was cleared they proceeded at once to Paris. I followed, and traced them from the Gare du Nord to an hotel close to the Paris, Lyons, and Mediterranean Railway Station, where they spent the night, and proceeded the following day to Geneva. This was a little puzzling. Why had they taken tickets for Geneva? It was a roundabout way to get to Spain. Perhaps it was a ruse to throw their pursuers off the scent. Anyway they had certainly purchased tickets for Geneva, and their luggage was registered to that place. In Geneva they stayed at the Hotel Beau Rivage, and the next day went on to Chur in the Canton des Grisons. The porter at the hotel registered their luggage for them to Chur so there was no mistake. I travelled on to Chur as fast as the train would take me. I arrived in the midst of a blinding snow-storm. It had been snowing for days, and the capital of the Grisons was buried in snow; while the great mountains that sur-

round the town were hidden from sight, being shrouded by the mists and the swirling snow. With the exception of *auberges* and inns such as are patronized by ordinary commercial travellers, only one hotel was opened, namely the Steinbock. I happened to be personally acquainted with the manager of this house, Herr Gredig. Naturally he was surprised to see me. He said that with the exception of two or three German and Italian commercials of the better class he had had no travellers for weeks save a lady and a gentleman on their way to Italy. The manager had ascertained from the gossips, for Chur is a small place and news soon travels, that the gentleman—who had registered his name in the hotel books as Mr. John Evelyn of Liverpool—had had an interview with Herr Weltdig, the manager of the Grisons bank, and the object of the interview was this. Tyler Twort—who called himself in the hotel John Evelyn—had purchased a shooting villa in the neighbouring mountains, four years before. He had only visited the villa twice since he purchased it; and the object in seeing the bank manager was to place the deeds of the property which were valuable, in his hands, and get an advance of money. At the same time he gave Herr Weltdig a written authorization to dispose of the villa and grounds at the first convenient opportunity.

Twort's reason for visiting Switzerland was now fully explained. He wanted to realize every penny he could lay his hands on, and not caring to sacrifice that Swiss property, he had run the risk necessitated by a journey to Switzerland in order that he might add to his store of money.

Having completed his business in Chur Mr. Twort, accompanied by his foster-daughter, had left the day previous to my arrival in a private carriage with a

view to crossing the Splügen pass and so making his way into Italy. He had been urged to delay his starting, owing to the terrible weather; but he insisted that very urgent business necessitated his pushing forward, and go he must. At first he had had some difficulty in getting a conveyance, and only succeeded in doing so on his offering a considerable increase on the usual terms. On account of the depth of snow the carriage had to go on sleigh runners, and the party left Chur about midday, the vehicle being drawn by two powerful horses. And he hoped to reach Thusis at the entrance to the Via Mala the same night, and pass the night there.

My plans were at once taken. I went to the head of the police; presented my credentials; showed him the warrant of arrest which I held, and asked for his assistance. He tried to persuade me that, having regard to the terrible weather, and the danger of the route owing to the snow, it was inadvisable to follow the fugitives for the present; but he said he would telegraph forward for Twort to be detained. Twort, however, had got a good start, and might already have reached Italian ground. I therefore resolved, let the risk be what it might, to start off at once; and after much bargaining and haggling I procured a two horse sleigh, which being much lighter than the one used by Twort gave me a decided advantage, and I hoped to overtake him. I was accompanied by two stalwart *gendarmes*, though I had had very great difficulty indeed in prevailing upon the chief to allow any of his men to accompany me. Your Swiss official—as everyone knows who has ever had anything to do with him—is a pig-headed, self-opinionated donkey, who will puff his cigarette smoke into your face, and argue himself hoarse in trying to prove that you are a fool, and he wisdom incarnate. There may

be Swiss officials, who do not do this, but I have never met them, and yet I spent some years of my life in Switzerland, a country which for natural beauty and grandeur of scenery is hard to beat.

On leaving Chur it seemed as if the elements had combined to thwart me, and not a few people predicted that my party would come to grief. The air was darkened with snow; the wind howled like a roaring lion; the cold was intense. Nevertheless I resolved on taking the journey, for I thought that what Twort and his ward could do I could do; and yet I was not indifferent to the fact that to travel over Swiss passes in such weather was a proceeding fraught with great personal discomfort, and not an inconsiderable amount of risk.

The distance from Chur to Thusis is about twelve miles, and the road all but quite level. Under ordinary circumstances it is pleasant enough. Pastures and mountains border the road on each side; and the brawling Hinter Rhein tears its way alone, now through open meadows, anon hidden from sight in some deep gorge, or howling with fury against some mighty barrier of rock which impedes its straight course. In summer the air is fragrant with hay, and sight is gratified by the blaze of colour which the wild flowers make, and the other senses are lulled by the repose, and the dreamy tinkling of the cow-bells on the mountain sides. But in winter and during a snow-storm such as that I had to encounter, the journey is one to be remembered. So heavily had it snowed that the road was completely obliterated, and it was with the greatest difficulty we made any progress at all. Three or four times the sleigh overturned, owing to the horses floundering in some ditch; and when the darkness closed upon us it verily seemed as if we were doomed to pass the dreary

hours of night in the howling wilderness of trackless snow. Thanks, however, to the instinct of the horses and the care of our driver, we managed to reach Thusis between ten and eleven; but we were almost more dead than alive with cold and hunger.

When I had thawed myself out before the hot stove in the dining-room of the comfortable little Rhätia hotel, I made inquiries about the fugitives, and ascertained, to my intense disgust, that after a short stay to change horses, they had pushed on to Splügen, the little village situated not far from the summit of the wild and terrible pass. Splügen is twenty miles from Thusis. In summer the route is sublime in its grandeur; in winter it is awful in its desolation and danger. Twort had started with four horses, and had promised the driver and conductor a hundred francs a-piece if they reached Splügen that night. No Swiss could resist such a temptation as that though his life was at stake, so the party had gone forward. My companions said that our course was to telegraph on and request that Twort and his foster-daughter might be detained at the custom-house on the frontier some few miles from Splügen. But there were two very substantial reasons why we could not do this. The first was the post office was closed and the official in charge was no doubt snoring in his bed. The second was, all telegraphic communication with Italy had ceased some hours ago, owing to the snow-storm and hurricane having broken down the wires. For us to have attempted to continue the journey then would have been to court certain death. And as a matter of fact if I had been disposed to risk it myself I should not have got a living soul to have accompanied me. Under the circumstances there was nothing for it but to wait till

daylight, and so I made a good supper, and enveloped in blankets soon fell asleep.

When daylight dawned the snow had ceased to fall; but the sky was like lead; the air numbingly cold. We were told that the road through the pass was absolutely impracticable owing to avalanches, and that there was every sign of a renewal of the storm in a short time. Although the weather was so bad on the Swiss side of the Alps, it was highly probable that it was fine on the Italian side. That was the case more frequently than not, and vice versa. The consequence was the birds would escape me. My *gendarmes*, however, refused to go on further. I urged, insisted, pleaded. It was all no use. They said they had no orders to go beyond Thusis. I resolved, however, not to be beaten; and by offering a heavy bribe I secured a sleigh and the services of two men, and with three horses driven tandem-wise we left the village followed by the jeers and evil prophecies of the gaping natives who had assembled to see us off. When we entered the gloomy Via Mala I confess to certain misgivings; for the horses sometimes plunged up to the breast in snow, and there was not a trace of the road to be seen, while hideous precipices were marked with deadly white cornices, and on the overhanging rocks above our heads, stupendous masses of snow were poised, and wanted but a breath, a vibration, to bring them thundering down and utterly annihilating us. With muffled sounds came the groaning of the river as it rushed through its rocky bed; otherwise all was still—the stillness of frozen death. Terrible work indeed it was! And the narrow escapes we had of going over the precipices, or of being hurled to destruction by the avalanches, were little short of miraculous. Over and over again did my companions plead to me

to remain in one or the other of the refuge stations; or seek shelter in some of the tiny villages *en route*, several of which seemed absolutely buried out of sight by the snow. But I was inflexible. I told them I had made a contract and they must carry it out, or they would have no pay. So sullenly they would go on again, and the horses laboured and struggled to the point of absolute exhaustion. Fortunately we were enabled to effect two changes of our steeds; namely at Zillis and at Andeer.

So difficult had been the journey that it took us six hours to reach Splügen. This village which is magnificently situated is 4,782 feet above the level of the sea, but in winter it is half buried. The weather there had been fairly fine that morning and there had been fitful gleams of sunshine. Twort and his companion had spent the night there, and when I arrived they had started on the continuation of their journey about two hours before. They had been advised that it was doubtful if the summit of the pass could be reached, owing to the snow, but that on the other side of the Alps fine weather prevailed. Having refreshed myself and my men, and procured fresh horses we pushed on.

Immediately on leaving the village the road crosses the Rhine by means of a narrow bridge, and then commences to ascend steeply through the pine forests. So deep was the snow, so steep the ascent that it really seemed as if our attempt to proceed would have to be abandoned. Moreover snow began to fall lightly again. I could not bring myself, however, to give the order to turn, and so we held our way. Presently we reached a tunnel, and passing through this we swept round a curve, and opened out a scene so wild, weird and desolate that I will try to describe it.

This part of the route is a tremendous basin shut

in on all sides by riven and splintered mountains, which rise to an enormous height. Not a tree or shrub is to be seen. The floor of the basin is piled up with millions of tons of *débris*, which fall from the surrounding precipices. It is a wrecked world in summer, the silence only broken by the rushing torrents, and the weird whistling of the lonely marmots. In the winter it is a world of white death, and many a traveller has perished there from cold, hunger, and fatigue. Looking at it from the position where we were, it seemed as if there was no outlet from this valley of desolation; but as a matter of fact the road descends to the bottom of the basin; then runs level for a quarter of a mile about, and emerges by a series of precipitous zig-zags to the summit of the pass, which is nearly 7,000 feet above the sea level.

As we gazed down into the terrible waste, so ghastly in its whiteness, so deathlike in its unbroken silence, we noted on the other side, looking like a toy, the sleigh we were pursuing. It was a closed sleigh, and the top was piled with the fugitives' luggage. Four horses were struggling to drag the heavy vehicle along; and though a considerable distance lay between us it seemed now as if we should overtake them before they could reach the frontier post on the summit. If they succeeded in doing that they might yet baffle me, for the officials at the Dogana, or Italian custom-house, would probably refuse to take upon themselves the responsibility of detaining the travellers. I therefore urged my driver to push on with all speed, and down the descent we plunged; then floundered forward through the drifted snow.

Through the snow-laden atmosphere I was enabled to discern the other vehicle, looking dim and ghostly as it toiled up the steep. Then suddenly it seemed as if

between it and us a curtain had been dropped. A tremendous blast of air struck us and almost turned us over; and a muffling roar and a rumbling fell upon our ears. My driver crossed himself, and murmured, dolefully :

“Lawine! Lawine!” (Avalanche, avalanche.)

The horses with the instinct of Alpine horses, which have a great dread of avalanches, stopped dead, and neighed piteously. It was some time before the air cleared sufficiently for us to see ahead again. We had not been touched, but the sleigh we had been pursuing was nowhere to be seen. It had been in the track of the avalanche, and its occupants, the horses, the driver had been hurled to destruction, and buried completely out of sight in that world of white death. We looked at each other in mute anguish; then my driver said :

“It is useless going on.”

I knew what he meant; but I thought it possible we might yet be able to render some aid, and told him so. He knew those dread regions better than I did, however, and shook his head ominously and sorrowfully. Nevertheless I told him to urge the horses forward, and this he did until further progress was barred by enormous, piled-up masses of newly fallen snow. No living thing save ourselves could be seen; not a sound was to be heard. I confess that my heart almost turned to stone as I realized the catastrophe. I descended from my vehicle still thinking that something might be done, but alas it was useless. The glare of the snow blinded me. Before us was the compacted avalanche; around us treacherous wastes of snow. It was absolutely impossible to go forward. There was nothing for it but to retrace our steps. With sorrowful hearts we drove back to Splügen where we reported the cir-

cumstance. Everyone in that lonely mountain village knew by awful experience how useless it would be to attempt then to save the lives of the ill-starred travellers, buried as they were beneath tons and tons of snow. Death would strike them with terrible swiftness; the blast which is driven before a falling avalanche would sweep them at once into eternity; and then the avalanche itself would bury them deep, deep beneath its awful weight. For days I waited, but nothing was found. A road was cut through the avalanche for vehicles to pass; but it was not until the bright sunshine and warm winds of some weeks later had melted the snow that the bodies were brought to light.

Twort and his beautiful companion; the driver and his mate, together with the horses were huddled together; all frozen in stony death. They had been hurled over a precipice, and had fallen in a heap. It was a terrible and totally unlooked for retribution that had overtaken the fugitives, and I confess to a feeling of profound sorrow.

Twort and Gwendoline were buried in one grave in the little churchyard of Splügen; and on the plain slab of marble which marks their resting-place the passing traveller may read the simple inscription in English:

Sacred to the Memory
of

TYLER TWORT AND GWENDOLINE SILVA
of London.

Who were killed by the fall of an avalanche
near the summit of the Splügen Pass.

“Behold it is come and it is done, saith the Lord.”

“Your life is even as a vapour that appeareth.”

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From certain papers found amongst his luggage there was reason to believe it was Mr. Twort's intention to ultimately make his way to Mexico; and he was proceeding to Genoa with a view to getting a vessel there when death overtook him on the wild Alpine Pass.

THE END.

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